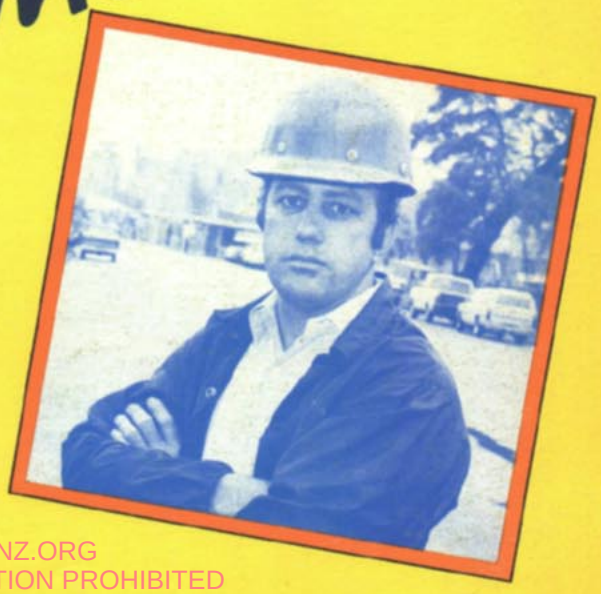
How the Media Made the Moral Majority

The Artful Put-down

The Washington Monthly

MAY 1982/$2

James Fallows on The Difference One Man Can Make



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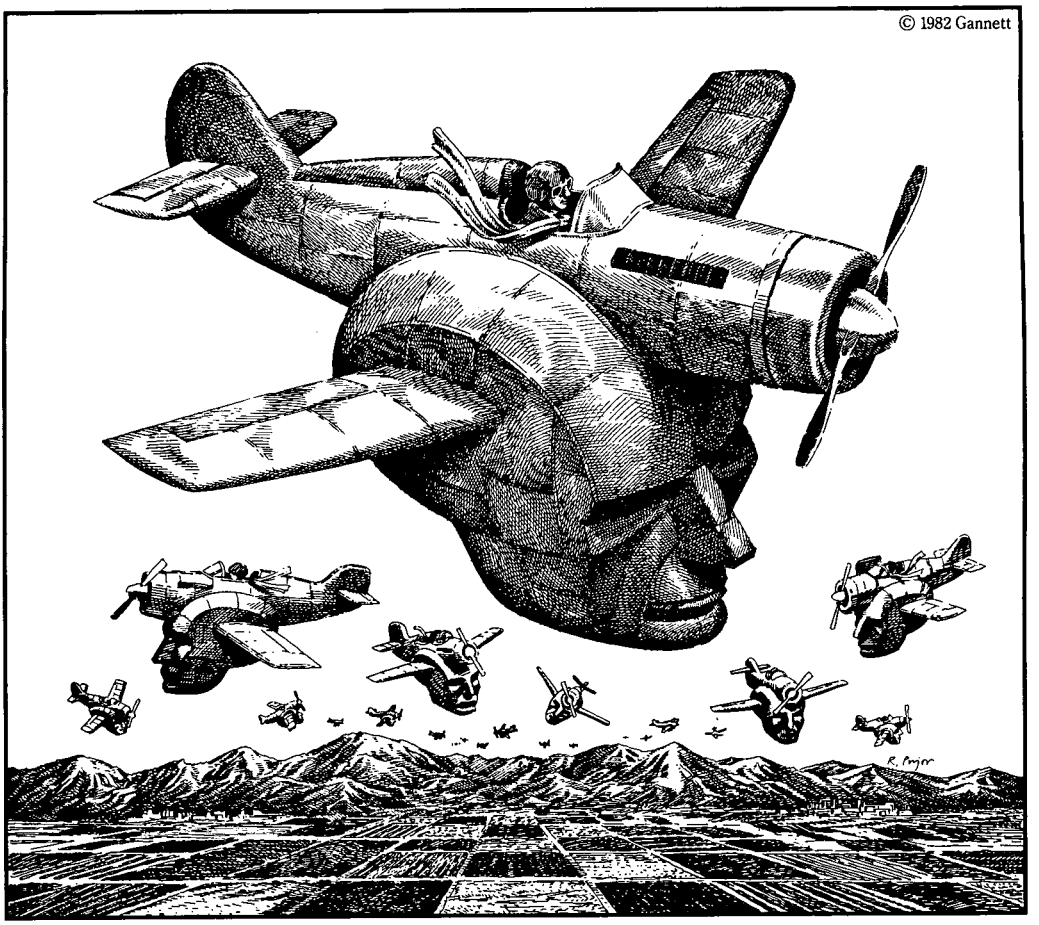

HELPING OTHERS

DO THE BEST THEY CAN

DENVER—Of the 56,000 mentally retarded residents of Colorado, an estimated 85% can achieve social and vocational independence, if given proper help.

Yet due to lack of public understanding, they are more often treated as objects of curiosity and need, than as responsible and useful citizens.

To help correct this perception, KBTV, the Gannett station in Denver, turned its cameras on retarded adults who are marrying, living independently and holding regular jobs. In a documentary series entitled "Doing the Best We Can," these residents spoke for themselves and told their own stories to KBTV reporter Bertha Lynn and cameraman John Fosholt, revealing interests and aspirations similar to those of their fellow citizens who are not handicapped.

KBTV was applauded for furthering public awareness of the facts about mental retardation by the Association for Retarded Citizens with its Excellence Award for Community Television. The series was also recognized by the One to One Foundation, a national organization concerned with the needs of the developmentally disabled.

The real reward came, however, in doing the best we can to help others do the best they can.

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GANNETT

A WORLD OF DIFFERENT VOICES WHERE FREEDOM SPEAKS

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Letters

Not a Neo-Liberal

What is this "patriotism" that wants tough-ass soldiers to go in and win Mission Ones in the desert ["Tilting at Windmills" March]? Sounds like grade-school stuff to me. The good guys vs. the "Japs" or the Germans. Or the new version of the same, Star Wars, with the good guys winning with brighter smiles and flashier weapons and true grit. What is the point of "winning" a raid in the desert that would have left 15 hostages and 30 American attackers killed or injured, to save the remaining 38 hostages, if it had succeeded (*Newsweek*, June 30, 1980)? Especially since we got ourselves in that mess by selling and giving lots of shining weapons to the bright, smiling Shah, and could have got the hostages by simply handing him over to the people he'd persecuted for years with our aid.

The second galling item is the naive (I read it in the newspaper, so it must be true) extolling of capitalism. What is this capitalism? Does it include the economies of South Korea, Chile, Argentina, and El Salvador? Are these brutal regimes evidence of "minor excesses" of capitalism, part of the price someone else has to pay for our "vital economy," or are they the logical extension of a philosophy that rates profits as the prime good, the highest interest?

CHRIS ELMS
Oakland, California

Be Civil to Civil Servants

Your comments in the March issue ["Tilting at Windmills"] regarding civil servants and the military reflect a commonly held prejudice against civil servants as well as lack of thorough information. The general view of civil servants seems based on what they make in Washington. You comment 48,000 make over $50,000, but you fail to mention the many GS-3s, -4s, and -5s who are not as well paid as others. I work on an air force base and I know there are few high salaried people here. You also comment that 90 percent of the service jobs are desk jobs. I don't know where you obtained your information, but that certainly is not true here or on many other tactical and SAC bases.

A. MALOY
Almagordo, New Mexico

The editor replies:

I should have said 90 percent of those retiring after 20 years' service are working in desk jobs at the time of their retirement.

Home Isn't Where the Office Is

Former Rep. Robert G. Stephens Jr. in 1975 began renting space for his district congressional office in a commercial building he owned—not in his home as you stated on page 8 of the March issue ["Tilting at Windmills"].

MAURICE FLIESS
Washington, D.C.

Kiddie Korner

Your quote from the *Texas Monthly* about day-care children missing their Mommys ["Tilting at Windmills," March] is heartbreaking. It should be an absolutely top priority of any decent government to make it possible for mothers who wish to be with their young children to do so.

JOHN HOLT
Boston, Masachusetts

Your reference to *Texas Monthly*'s article on the situation in a day care center has had a strong effect on me. I am a single parent of a ten-year-old who attended a day care center for three years from age three to six. My daugher enjoyed every day at the day care center, learned enormously valuable things there, and was never looking all day long for Mommy, nor were the other children who attended the center. In fact, there were occasions when she preferred going to the center over staying home, where there were no other children for her to play with. The staff of the day care center we used was interested, concerned, and educated to meet the needs of their charges, and loving.

ELLEN CARNEY
New Rochelle, New York

It was heartening to see your recognition of "the truly needy mother" who must work to support her children in your comments on Deborah Fallows' article on motherhood [January] in the March issue. It would have been more heartening had you recognized that the burden for supporting the children of these women lies not just with their mothers and the

"THE NUCLEAR-FREEZE movement represents a *political* initiative. It arises out of the political *successes* Regan has so far achieved. It has nothing whatever to do with the relative strengths of current U.S. and Soviet strategic forces or with this or that weapons system. Correctly perceived, the nuclear-freeze movement represents *political* desperation; it has attracted the support of most of the defeated political figures of the past generation."

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federal government's Aid for Dependent Children program, but also with their fathers. As a lawyer who formerly practiced family law, I often heard judges, lawyers, and social workers quote the statistic that 80 percent of divorced fathers stop paying their court-ordered child support within two years of entry of the divorce decree. This figure does not include those fathers who simply disappear and avoid court proceedings altogether.

As a taxpayer, I suggest that our federal resources be directed, not to aid for "truly needy mothers," but to equalizing the burden of support between mothers in custody of their children and the fathers who have avoided their responsibility for the support of their children.

SALLY E. MATHIASEN
American Embassy
Bogota, Colombia

Out of Business

When obvious factual errors are incorporated in an article, the credibility of the total article is subject to serious doubts. Such was the case in Cramer's recent article entitled "One Step Ahead of the Sheriff" [March]. A simple fact, Selection Research, Inc. (SRI) does not conduct, nor has SRI conducted for over three years ". . . superintendent searches on behalf of paying school boards." Another factual error was SRI conducting workshops "on such topics as 'How to Be a Successful School Leader.'. . ." Again, we have not done this for over three years. Since we have not conducted superintendent searches for over three years nor have we conducted workshops like the one cited for over three years, it is difficult to understand how ". . . business, as usual, is brisk"?

GARY M. HOELTKE
Lincoln, Nebraska

Mr. Hoeltke is vice president of Selection Research, Inc.

The author replies:

Mr. Hoeltke is technically correct. Several controversies, including the one in Colorado Springs recounted in my article, led SRI to sell its superintendent search business several years ago to one of its vice presidents, who now runs a similar operation. In the meantime, SRI is still active in other aspects of educational testing and consulting.

Overhaul the VA

Thanks for the brilliant summary of the VA medical situation ["Old Soldiers Never Die," Phil Keisling, March]. I hope every veteran—all ages—and every adult non-veteran—reads it. It took me a whole semester in an excellent course at Hunter to get a glimmer of the situation. It's very unpopular, I agree, to attack special population benefits, but it really is a shame and a waste and needs massive overhaul.

JO ANNE FELDSTEIN
New York, New York

The Washington Monthly

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Published monthly except combined July/August issue by The Washington Monthly Company, 2712 Ontario Road, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009, (202) 462-0128.

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ISSN 0043-0633.

Subscription rates: U.S. and possessions: one year, $22; two years, $39; three years, $52. Additional charges per year, foreign subscriptions: Canada, $3; other, $25 air mail, $3 surface mail. Back issues, $3. Send all remittances and correspondence concerning subscriptions, undelivered copies, and changes of address to 2712 Ontario Road, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009. For changes of address, please provide four weeks' advance notice and return old address label.

The Washington Monthly is indexed in the Book Review Index, Public Affairs Information Service, the Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature, the Social Science Index, and Ulrich's International Periodicals Directory, and may be obtained on microfilm from University Microfilms International, Ann Arbor, MI 48106.

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MAY 1982

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Tilting at Windmills

Judging by the response to Jonathan Schell's *New Yorker* articles about the potential extinction of mankind in a nuclear war (now collected in a book called *The Fate of the Earth*), you would think this is the first time Americans have awakened to the danger of nuclear war. But in 1946 John Hersey wrote a book called *Hiroshima* that, like Schell's, appeared originally in *The New Yorker*. It was discussed in the same worshipful tones—"Seminal. My God, you must read it"—as Schell's, and grey-haired women were inspired to similarly eloquent declarations in town meetings about the unacceptability of nuclear war. Norman Cousins, during the same period, was writing one editorial after another—remember "Modern Man is Obsolete"?—in *The Saturday Review*, urging world government as the answer.

And a young man named Cord Meyer became head of an organization called the United World Federalists that was dedicated to fulfilling Cousins's vision. Then, for Meyer, commenced an education that he tried to capture in the title of his book, *Facing Reality*, which was published a couple of years ago. However sensible the idea of world government might seem, Meyer learned it did not commend itself to the leaders of the world, and most particularly, it had absolutely no allure for Joseph Stalin. After pounding his fists against stone walls for several years, Meyer gave up, "faced reality," and joined the CIA, where he spent most of the next 30 years trying to make life difficult for the Soviet Union.

Many others who had been stirred by Hersey and Cousins gave up and faced reality, too. They joined the Truman-Eisenhower-Kennedy-Johnson cold war bureaus of the late forties and fifties and sixties, and in their disillusionment wasted much of the rest of their lives on a Meyer-like monomaniacal preoccupation with the Soviets. This led them to some serious errors in Guatemala, Iran, at the Bay of Pigs, and, worst of all, to the massive escalation in South Vietnam from 1965 to 1968. They were not wrong about Stalin, but they were terribly wrong in their failure or their slowness to appreciate the post-Stalin changes in Russia and in the rest of the communist world. Worst of all was their failure to participate in the other affairs of their society, in all the work that needed doing but that was not related to "national security."

What similar disillusionments await those who pin their efforts on nuclear disarmament today? Will they find one villain behind the frustration of their hopes and become monomaniacal about him or it? Will they now ignore our other grave problems, like the threat of depression, as they focus all their energies on preventing nuclear holocaust? Will we have another generation of Cord Meyers? That is my fear and that is why I appeal to all those who may have been swept away by Mr. Schell's eloquence to realize that we have other problems—the most important of which is the economy—and to understand that the hawks are right in believing the most likely route to disarmament is negotiating from strength.

Wait a minute. Don't throw the magazine down in disgust. I don't mean the hawks are right about everything. Far from it—I think that otherwise they are mostly wrong. We certainly don't need all the deterrent the administration wants. If you read our last issue, you know we think there are very substantial cuts that can and should be made in the defense budget. But we do think we have to have the combination of a deterrent that can survive a Soviet first-strike and a conventional war capability that will leave no doubt among the Russians that disarmament is better than war. Arriving at that strength without bankrupting the nation is a matter of complexity and difficulty, not nearly so easy as being anti-nuke, period. But in my view at least it is the only way we will finally rid ourselves of the threat of nuclear war. . . .

Do you think you're working in a cutthroat world, torn apart by professional jealousies? If so, stop feeling sorry for yourself this moment and contemplate the plight of American political cartoonists. One of the most prominent peers, Pat Oliphant,

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recently expressed these opinions of his rivals:

Mike Peters: "a disaster. . . a lightweight joker. . . I couldn't take him seriously."

Paul Conrad: "a knee-jerk, limousine, doctrinaire liberal."

Jeff MacNelly: "never made what I would call a really strong statement in his career."

There appears to be a new mood of sexual restraint abroad in the land, particularly among the educated elite, who in recent years have tended to scorn this form of morality. It seems to be fueled largely by an idealistic desire to return to family values, but I suspect there is also a practical factor at work. It is herpes. The genital variety of this disease has become the clap of the upper classes. Of the anywhere from five to twenty million people it is estimated to afflict, one survey indicates that well over half have incomes of over $20,000 a year. The fact that the disease is incurable—unlike syphillis and gonorrhea —is what is making a lot of people think twice about slipping into bed with that attractive stranger at the singles bar. Getting to know you, getting to know all about you, as the song goes, has become not only wise from a human relations standpoint but the most elementary form of sexual prudence. . . .

Don't go to the hospital unless you have absolutely no choice. The director of the Center for Disease Control says two million of the people who enter hospitals each year catch infections unrelated to their original condition. Eighty thousand die from these infections. This makes hospitals more lethal than highways, and that's not even counting vicitms of botched surgery. By the way, doctors who do not carefully clean their hands as they go from patient to patient are one of the few non-sexual ways that genital herpes is transmitted. . . .

Did you read about that gasoline truck overturning in a California tunnel? The resulting firestorm incinerated seven people. These tank trucks are dangerous, because during quick lane changes they are more than twice as likely to overturn as the average passenger car. In fact, those two-tanker combinations are three to five times likelier to overturn, according to a study conducted by the University of Michigan's Highway Safety Research Institute. "But what do environmentalists get most excited about?" writes Allan Parachini in *The Los Angeles Times*. "It's radioactive wastes. But what's the single most dangerous cargo there is? It's gasoline."

The first theorem of *The Washington Monthly*—indeed it was proclaimed in our first issue—is that the people at the top of government agencies seldom have the slightest idea of what is going on down below. The latest example of this truth was the recent Washington subway accident that killed three passengers. It turns out that the central control room supervisor under whose direction the train was operated had not ridden the line involved since it opened for passenger service, so his feel for the on-the-scene realities at the time of the accident was roughly the same as Lyndon Johnson's as he deployed his bombers in Vietnam from the White House Situation Room. . . .

According to George Reedy, his onetime press secretary, Lyndon Johnson was a man who had no concept of the social usefulness of small talk that didn't involve politics. Once a reporter who had been granted an interview tried to break the ice with a routine inquiry about daily life in the White House. Johnson's reply: "What kind of chicken-shit question is that to ask the leader of the free world?". . .

In regard to our recent report about the travel and entertainment expenses of public officials, we are delighted to report that the Santa Clara (California) County planning commissioners have decided to stop billing the taxpayers for their expensive dinners. "It just wasn't worth continuing," said one commissioner. "We were coming off like bad guys." On the other hand, I am embarrassed to tell you that San Francisco Mayor Diane Feinstein's travel and entertainment budget is not $1.8 million but $19,000 and that San Diego Mayor Pete Wilson's was not $620,000 but $9,254. My figures came from these two paragraphs of a story by Philip J. Trounstine in the *San Jose News:*

"The bills were paid from the [San Jose] mayor's budget for entertainment and travel—$10,500 this year out of a total mayor's office budget of $190,000.

"That's a lot less than the $1.8 million San Francisco Mayor Diane Feinstein commands or the $620,000 in San Diego Mayor Pete Wilson's budget, but it's down from the $213,000 Hayes spent last year."

If you can't figure out what I got wrong—it certainly took me a while—note how "entertainment and travel" became part of "total mayor's office budget" in the first paragraph so that the total office budget is what the second paragraph refers to, not the travel and entertainment budget. This is how newspapers make stories seem more than they really are, and I apologize for having been taken in by the device. . . .

Last month we noted that the navy's Aegis cruiser has a slight problem: its radar signals are strong enough to act as a homing target for enemy missiles. Now an article in *Spectrum* by Thomas Amlie, former director of the Navy Weapon Center at China Lake, says the same problem applies to the F-14, F-15, F-16, and F-18 fighter bombers, the B-1 bomber, the AWACs planes, and the Patriot air defense missile. . . .

In Ronald Reagan's world, who would be the prime suspects in Medicaid fraud cases? Scruffy welfare cheats, black women who keep getting pregnant, and other members of the predatory poor.

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But, according to a report in *The Los Angeles Times*, the villains are not the patients but the hospitals, physicians, nursing homes, and pharmacies that improperly siphon off from $2.5 billion to $6 billion per year from the $24 billion Medicaid program. . . .

Why are the streets so full of potholes? One reason we already have given you: In the last 20 years the percentage of city budgets devoted to salaries has gone up while the percentage going for maintenance has gone down. But I suspect another culprit: rock salt and other chemicals that are routinely spread over city streets at the first sight of a snowflake. Why is this devastating municipal service—which, by the way, is also turning rust into a major automotive disease—performed with such unaccustomed alacrity? Because every mayor in America knows what happened to New York's John Lindsay and Chicago's Michael Bilandic when they were a bit slow getting the snow off the streets. . . .

Have you heard about Wing Song? It is an organization based in California—where else?—that teaches a theory called "manifesting," which says you can get anything you want—a new love or a new car—simply by wishing for it. Led by one Lisa de Longchamps, according to a report in *The New York Times*, it offers workshops from $275 (two days on how to attract "inner twin flames") to $815 (which gives you the entire "divine plan of opulence"). . . .

But all is not lost in California. Indeed, my new hero is Alfred Alquist, a state senator who is proposing to save $30 million from the state budget by the simple but profound expedient of eliminating state-supported law schools. It makes little sense, Alquist contends, for the public to subsidize legal education when there are already too many lawyers:

"More lawyers seldom produce anything but more delay in the on-going processes of government, law, and business. . . . Lawyers may be always with us but there's no reason we should ask the public to pay for their creation.". . .

I think the next class war will be a rebellion of the poor blacks against the black elite. Recently, here in Washington, a YMCA branch serving underprivileged youth was closed by the black-elite-led Metropolitan YMCA, which, like so many Ys around the country has turned into a club for the well-to-do while largely losing sight of its original mission.

In this respect, at least, the members of the black elite are no different from their white counterparts and I don't imagine that is inspiring much affection among the less fortunate members of their own race. . . .

This raises another question that troubles me. Are the charities that we fund through the United Way ready for the depression that might be around the corner? Can they feed and clothe and house those who will have no place to turn or have they become, like the Ys, too fastidious to want their premises sullied by the poor?

My fear is that private charities have followed the tendency of government social service bureaucracies toward spending more money on the salaries and carpets and cars of the programs' officials than the actual delivery of the programs' services to the poor. I hope the newspapers around the country will assign reporters to the task of finding out what their local charities are doing—about the actual help they are delivering to the sick and needy, as contrasted to the support they are providing their staffs.

In case you are one of those who, like the Reaganites, don't believe there is a growing need out there, the Salvation Army has a mobile soup kitchen that in just one locality, North Sacramento, California, is serving 350 lunches each Saturday and Sunday to people who can't quite get through the week on their other income. . . .

Lester Thurow has a good idea on how to overcome the preoccupation with the short-term that so limits American management: make all executive bonuses dependent on long-term profits. . . .

As veteran readers of this magazine know, many of the causes we advocate do not immediately achieve widespread support. One such proposal was to take social security away from the rich and make it an insurance program against need in one's old age instead of an unconditional promise to pay even if the payment is used for a room at the Ritz. Now we're happy to report *The New York Times Magazine* has published an article advocating that a means test be applied to social security, and the heresy appears to be creeping even into the paper's editorial columns. . . .

If you are one of those liberals—I used to be one—who believe there are vast numbers of innocents unjustly held in our jails, you must see "Richard Pryor Live On the Sunset Strip," if only for his observations on our system of criminal justice. Pryor says something like this: "I spent six weeks at the Arizona State Penitentiary making a movie. I had a chance to really talk to the inmates, really get to know them—what they were really like—and you know what I say, 'Thank God for the penitentiary!' ". . .

Several years ago the District of Columbia reduced its garbage collection crews from four men to three and was astonished to find that productivity increased. Now New York City has discovered that switching from three-man trucks to trucks needing only two workers results in improved productivity that can save the city $7.7 million a year. The saving would be even greater had not the sanitation union demanded an additional $11 payment per worker for each shift spent on two-man trucks. . . .

The measure to require sodium-content labeling appears to be

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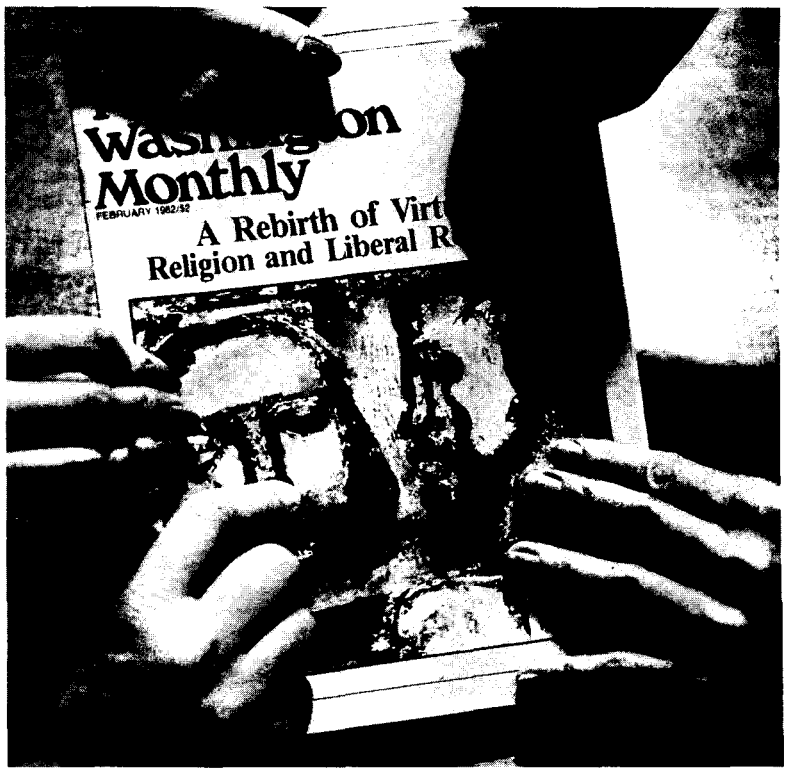
"It's the first magazine everybody grabs for when it comes into the office."

Ira Rosen, Producer, 60 Minutes



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So you dispensed with the pleasure of reading the magazine *The N. Y. Times* calls **"indispensable."** Missed reading what *Time* magazine calls **"must reading."**

While we were, in the words of *The Washington Post,* doing our **"specialty—politics and government—better than any other magazine around,"** you were left with, well, any other magazine that was around.

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dead for this session of Congress. As usual, a conspiracy of lobbyists was guilty, but, according to *The Washington Post*, Campbell's Soup appears to have been the key villain. Since there are 60 million Americans with diagnosed or borderline high blood pressure who should be on low-sodium diets, and since salt intake is linked to strokes and heart attacks, I urge you to express your indignation by refusing to buy Campbell products. . . .

Senator Claiborne Pell recently told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that it would be a "dangerous precedent" to send a political appointee, Max Friedersdorf, instead of a foreign service officer as counsel general to Bermuda. Who cares except the blessed individual himself? We don't really need a counsel general in Bermuda. It is a "reward" post. But if we send anyone there, there is no reason why it should not be a reward for people who have spent their lives in politics just as much as a reward for career civil servants. . . .

The righteous prejudice against the politician and in favor of the career civil servants is one of the things that has long maddened me about the conventional, respectable establishment mind—of which there is surely no better example than Senator Pell's. If we are going to truly reform the American system of government, we need more politics rather than less—more good people running for office and helping other good people run for office. If you never again want to face a choice between a Jimmy Carter and a Ronald Reagan, you must make sure you have a lot more people to choose from, a lot more good people pursuing political careers.

This in turn means offering decent rewards for a life in politics. Today a person who starts out in politics has a very tiny field of opportunity—congressman, senator, governor, and just two thousand federal appointive positions. But what if we opened up hundreds of thousands of federal jobs to political appointees, replacing as jobs come open through normal attrition roughly 50 percent of the federal government's 2.8 million civilian employees? Give the new people two-and-a-half-year appointments, with a limit of five years on the time they would be permitted to remain in government. This would:

1) bring people with real world experience into government,

2) attract a different kind of person—risk-takers who are not interested in job security and who would be less cautious and self-protective than civil servants,

3) provide a legitimate reward for political participation and thus attract more people to political activity. (The reward would be legitimate because the unqualified would not profit from it. Your sister Susie who can't type 20 words a minute will not get that government typing job no matter how hard she worked in your campaign.),

4) send back to the nation as members of the voting public literally millions of people who have personal knowledge of how the government doesn't work, of the reforms that are needed to make it function, and of how to bring them about.

But suppose the Reaganites were permitted to begin making such appointments now? They would do some harm. That I cannot dispute. But you could elect a good president in 1984 and replace them all in 1985 with people who are dedicated to the program of the new president. Because you could see the difference they would make, I think you would be much more concerned with the president you elect. Remember, the last president who did great things was FDR. And he hired, not the two thousand employees recent presidents have been able to choose, but two and a half *million*. We don't have to go that far, but it does suggest the direction in which we need to travel.

All this is not to say that I think the career civil servant serves no useful purpose. If I felt that way, I wouldn't advocate retaining half of them as I do. They provide continuity, institutional memory, and an insurance policy against the excesses of the politicians. All of these are valuable roles. But we also need people with other virtues, the kind of people short-term appointments would attract. Most of all we need to provide the incentives that will attract people who can revitalize our political system. If we don't want a system that runs on money, then we have to offer something else. What is better to offer to the people who push the doorbells and hand out the leaflets than the opportunity to participate in putting into effect the programs they have campaigned for?

If this program had been in effect for even a few years, we now would have a nation far better equipped to make the budget cuts that are needed. We would have a public that didn't have to guess where the fat was because they'd know exactly where to find it.

Finally, we would have people in government who, because they've spent most of the lives on the outside, would have genuine empathy for the problems of those on the outside. The lack of such empathy has been the most glaring deficiency of the bureaucracy since I have been in Washington. And I fear it will become worse, because the mindless Reaganite attack on the bureaucracy is going to exacerbate the civil servants' tendency toward self-protection just as did the equally mindless McCarthy attack of the fifties. . . .

When Jerry Brown was asked if his commitment to cutting defense expenditures extended to the B-1 bomber, which is made mostly in California, he replied, of course not. When Barry Goldwater was asked how he could oppose the Apache helicopter, which is made in Arizona, he replied, "Hell, they could build it in my living room, and I won't go along until they get the price down."

—*Charles Peters*

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The Difference One Man Can Make

by James Fallows

A familiar literary conception holds that when an honest man challenges a dishonest system, it's the man who gets destroyed. At one end of the literary scale, this is the message of Henrik Ibsen's An Enemy of the People, *in which the citizens of a resort town ostracize their local doctor rather than let him utter the truth that their health-giving water is poisonous. At the other end of the scale, it is the story of* Jaws, *in which a sheriff is silenced about the menace from the deep until a giant shark is gobbling everything in sight.*

Parts of reality conform to this conception, but other parts do not. Wyman Westberry belongs to a part of the world that Henrik Ibsen barely could have imagined, for Westberry's is the story of an honest man who won. Twelve years after he began to challenge a corrupt system, Westberry has prevailed and the system has been destroyed. On his road to success, Wyman Westberry was persistent and courageous, which is one reason his story deserves to be told. But he was also shrewd and cunning. His story demonstrates strategies that, if Ibsen's Dr. Stockmann had understood them, might have given a different ending to that play.

I first met Wyman Westberry in the summer of 1970. I was straight out of college, a "Nader's Raider" working on a project in Savannah, Georgia. Westberry was then, as he is now, a millwright at the Gilman Paper Company's plant in St. Marys, Georgia. The project in Savannah was a study of the influence that one large company—a paper mill—had on the surrounding community. Westberry had read a news-

James Fallows is Washington editor of The Atlantic *and a contributing editor of* The Washington Monthly.

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paper story about the project and telephoned one night to say, in effect, if you're interested in company towns, I've got something you'll want to see.

He called near midnight, while I was sitting behind a broken desk in our project's office in Savannah. That first time, and in all the hundred phone calls I have had from him since then, he called through the operator, person-to-person. He'd seen my name in the newspaper, Westberry said, and he wanted to ask for my help—really, Ralph Nader's—in his city. Then he began to tell me his story.

I was no stranger to the South, but I had rarely come across an accent as rube-like as what I was hearing over the phone. I had never heard of St. Marys, much less of someone calling himself Wyman Westberry. An older, more jaded version of myself might have dismissed the guy as a probable nuisance. We were under the gun as it was, in a rush to complete our Savannah report, and the last thing I was seeking was additional complications. But I was 20 years old, and this was the early bloom of the Nader movement; it was just not in the spirit of things to turn down a possible informant because I thought he sounded funny. A few days after Westberry's call, several members of the project, including me and my wife, took the three-hour drive down the Georgia coast to St. Marys. Ever afterwards we have been glad that we did.

St. Marys sits at the very southeastern corner of Georgia, separated by a river from Florida and by a few dozen miles from the Okefenokee Swamp. Offshore is Cumberland Island, southernmost of the chain that includes such dressed-up resort islands as Hilton Head and St. Simons. Cumberland was once stylish, too. In the nineteenth century, Carnegies and Rockefellers had decorated the island with their estates. By 1970 most of the estates were ruins, and wild horses, pigs, and deer ran untrammeled across the dunes.

The land around St. Marys, red Georgia clay, was covered with southern pines. Because this was paper mill country, the pines were often planted in rows, like corn, and were harvested after 20 years or so of growth to be taken to the mills. The road to St. Marys led directly through these managed woods, and as we drove we could watch the pines march by in straight rows. The only way into St. Marys, if you were coming by land, was an 11-mile drive down a two-lane road that led from the state highway to the city, where it came to an end.

The city itself was a settlement of small frame houses, some on paved roads and some on dirt, divided into a black and a white part of town. The air was even hotter and more humid, even more like a blast furnace, than it had been in Savannah. Along with the pine trees, there were elaborately twisted live-oak trees, with greyish-green Spanish moss dripping from their branches. St. Marys advertised itself as the second-oldest settlement in America, after St. Augustine; in the middle of town was a graceful antebellum mansion, suggesting links to the past, that had been converted to a public hall. A block away, where the main street made a dead-end at the waterfront, there was a diner with a jukebox, which constituted the principal night spot in town.

In the middle of it all, though "it all" makes it sound unduly extensive, sat the mill. The Gilman Paper Company had moved south from Vermont late in the Depression, in search of cheaper labor. The St. Marys mill, which began operation in 1941, had been expanded and modernized several times since then, and by 1970 it was a medium-sized mill, producing about 900 tons of paper a day. To Gilman, the St. Marys plant represented the company's entire output of paper; to St. Marys, Gilman represented the only meal ticket in town. Four thousand men, women, and children lived in St. Marys. The mill's payroll varied between 1,500 and 2,000. After you made allowances for housewives, children, and pensioners, you were left with the fact that almost everyone who worked in St. Marys worked for Gilman Paper. Those who didn't depend on the mill directly often did indirectly, as merchants and tradesmen whose major accounts lay on the other side of the mill gate. There were only a handful of exceptions, such as the fishermen and shrimpers, the family that ran the restaurant, and the local employees of the post office or the Georgia Power Company. "Gilman Paper Company is the only major Georgia industry south of Brunswick and east of Waycross," the mill's manager said in a speech in 1967. "It can be safely stated that not less than 75 percent of the economy of Camden County is directly dependent on Gilman Paper Company."

Physically, the symbol of the mill's preeminence was its enormous smokestack, from which issued billows of steam, smoke, and the many gaseous by-products of paper production. All paper mill towns have an unmistakable, overripe, cooked-cabbage odor; the smell is nearly impossible to eliminate, since the methyl mercaptans that create it can be detected at concentrations of several parts per billion in the air. But in this as in many other things, St. Marys displayed conditions at their extremes. The smell here was far stronger than in other pulp towns; you could almost feel the acrid particles on your face. The oak trees that stood

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downwind of the factory had small leaves and were bare of Spanish moss. Close to the mill, some of the oaks were skeletons that had no leaves at all. A fine grit covered cars that were parked on the street; it ate at their rubber fittings and their chrome.

In the army, Westberry protested when he discovered officers were stealing food. Initially reprimanded, he was later rewarded. 'That was when I realized you could buck the system, if you were right, and if you stuck to your guns.'

Psychologically, the mill's presence was as inescapable as its odor. The Gilman Paper Company was life, and life was the mill, and woe be to him who complained about the arrangement.

The company once circulated a newspaper expressing its creed:

"REMEMBER THIS—IF YOU WORK FOR A MAN,

in Heaven's name, WORK for him. If he pays your wages which supply your bread and butter, work for him; speak well of him; stand by him and stand by the institution he represents. . . . As long as you are part of the institution do not condemn it. If you do that, you are loosening the tendrils that are holding you to the institution, and at the first high wind that comes along, you will be uprooted and blown away, and probably—will never know the reason why."

The Gilman headquarters were in Manhattan, where the Gilman brothers, Charles and Howard, presided over the company and led a cosmopolitan life as patrons of the arts. But since the late forties, the Gilman family had delegated nearly all authority for local operations to the resident manager in St. Marys, one George W. Brumley. Brumley had been a colonel in the army during World War II, and he retained command presence in St. Marys. There he was known by such names as "the big man" and "the king." He had become a major landowner and was the largest single shareholder in the St. Marys State Bank. His greatest tactical advantage was that nearly everyone else in St. Marys stood in a position of dependence upon him. The result was a climate of suspicion and fear. Wyman Westberry drew all the shades in his house before he would talk with us—and this was a marvel of courage. Another man would talk with outside visitors only after he had turned out every light and waited for the visitors to creep into his dark and apparently vacant house. Most others would not consider talking at all.

As we later learned, the people of St. Marys had excellent reasons for their fear. Within four months of our first visit, Wyman Westberry would see his political ally, a local physician, framed on a trumped-up charge of rape. Within two years, one of his fellow Gilman employees allegedly would be hired to murder Westberry. And when that alleged plot was foiled, Westberry would lose his job and be driven from town on the basis of a pathetically fraudulent accusation.

All these things would happen because Wyman Westberry launched two waves of challenges against the established order in St. Marys. One was an appeal to outside allies, beginning with Ralph Nader; the other, an attempt to develop local political support. As those efforts grew more and more successful, the mill's counterattack became more and more intense. It was aimed at Westberry's supporters, and at his income, and even at his life. That Wyman Westberry was able to

WESTWARD IN EDEN

The Public Lands and the Conservation Movement

By William K. Wyant

The demand for raw materials and energy weighed against the impact of these demands on the environment is a common debate. Nowhere is it so apparent as in the current controversies involving James Watt, the "Sagebrush Rebellion," and the future of this country's public lands. By tracing the history of American land settlement through the 1970s, Wyant provides a setting in which today's land and environmental issues can be assessed.

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survive the counterattack, and finally saw his opponents driven from power, depended partly on his skillful tactics, but also on the traits of character he had formed before he came to the town.

Mess Hall Messiah

Wyman Westberry is a shortish man, quite powerfully built. At the time I met him in 1970, his dark hair was already receding, even though he was only 28 years old.

Westberry had grown up in Jesup, Georgia, the sixth child out of ten and the youngest son. His father was a dealer for Sinclair Oil who later went to work for the state department of agriculture. It was a tight but not impoverished setting, and one strong on basic right/wrong religious values. Westberry was always industrious. He took jobs and saved money from the time he was young. In high school, he says, he concentrated on girls and football. "I was normal then."

After high school, Westberry moved from here to there, attending college briefly in Savannah, taking night courses at the City College of New York while working construction during the day. In 1964 he was drafted, and while in the army he demonstrated some of the literal-mindedness about questions of honesty that was to have such an impact on St. Marys.

Near the end of his service Westberry was assigned for a short tour to his engineering company's headquarters at Fort Belvoir, outside Washington, D.C. There he found that his company had been substantially beefed up, in preparation for dispatch to Vietnam. But of the 100-plus men in the company, only ten or twelve were eating in the mess hall. "I asked the question, Why is this?" Westberry says. "Some of the guys said, just eat over there and you'll find out why. So I did. They were serving hot dogs twice a day, for lunch and the evening meal, and for the morning it was what we called s-o-s. The good quality of meat and food was just not there."

One evening a short time later, a soldier named Marshall came running into the barracks saying, "Wyman, Wyman, come here with me!" Marshall had been working KP. The officers in charge of the mess hall had told him to put the steaks and other top-grade food off to the side, and then they had dismissed him. He, Westberry, and another soldier (a one-time law student) went back to the mess hall, where they saw a lieutenant and two sergeants loading the food into the trunk of a car.

Several days later Westberry and the former law student went to the U.S. Capitol and found the office of Senator Richard Russell of Georgia, who was then the chairman of the Armed Services Committee. They were told by his assistant that they would have to file a formal complaint against the food services of the U.S. army, which they did.

"The first part of the next week I was singled out of formation," Westberry says. "The captain told me that he did not appreciate any such complaint, and that I would be restricted to the company area until further notice.

"I told him, 'You may keep me here a week, you may keep me here a month, or you may keep me here for the balance of my military service. But one day you are going to have to let me go, and at that time I am going to tell Senator Russell that I've been penalized for speaking out about wrongdoings.' That was in the morning time. At lunch time, when I went through the mess hall, the mess sergeants said, there's the goddam squealer, there's the guy who complained about our food.

"That afternoon, I was singled out of formation again and told to report to battalion headquarters. I went down there and was waiting to see the major. I started to salute when I saw him, but he reached out to shake my hand. He said, 'I want to thank you for being conscientious enough to bring to attention any wrong-doing you see. We would have liked for you to bring it to our attention first, but we know about it now and we'll make the change.' He gave me a three-day pass, and when I got back, I noticed that 75 percent of the company was eating in the mess hall. The major also required the officers to eat there so they'd see what kind of food we were having. All the mess cooks were gone, too—not a single one of the old ones was there.

"That was when I realized that you could buck the system, if you were right, and if you stuck to your guns."

From some men, such sentiments would sound grandiose or sarcastic; but Wyman Westberry means them to reflect the literal experience of his life. Episodes such as this must have been crucial in *confirming* Wyman Westberry's understanding of the world. Their plain lesson was that if you were forthright and persistent, and if you had sufficient cunning about where to look for help—not every draftee would have thought to speak to Senator Russell—and if you were right, you would eventually win. That lesson was soon put to the test in St. Marys.

The original object of Westberry's complaint—the reason he called me in Savannah—was the Gilman mill's pollution of the nearby waters of the St. Marys and North rivers. In the late 1960s, paper mills all over the country were beginning what was to be a long and very

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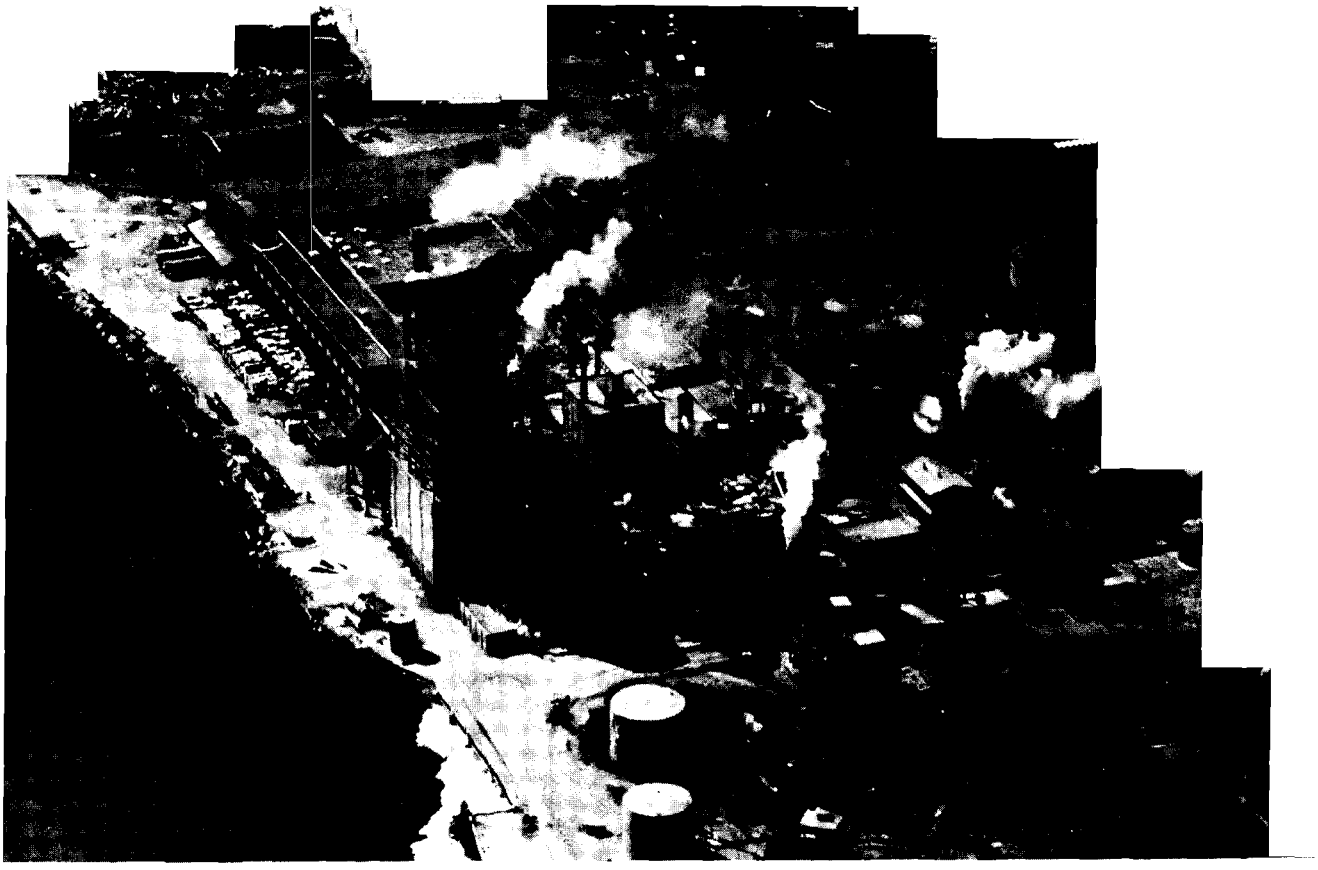

The Gilman Paper Company's plant discharged 18 million gallons of untreated waste into the river each day. Fumes from the plant left nearby oak trees stunted and bare of leaves.

expensive process of reducing air and water pollution. Gilman was several steps behind the pack. The 18 million gallons of waste water the plant generated daily were discharged into the river with no treatment at all. Although the Gilman plant produced only one third as much paper as did the Union Camp mill in Savannah (which was the focus of the Nader project), the two plants released roughly the same amount of organic pollutants into the water.

The water pollution showed up as a dirty white foam that scudded along the river. At the water's edge, the marsh grass had been burned from its normal deep green to a dead grey. The recreational life of St. Marys focuses on the water, and when people took their motorboats across to Fernandina Beach, Florida, they could see the foam being churned up by their wakes.

When he moved to St. Marys, Westberry took up waterskiing and started to notice the pollution. "At first I wondered why I was the only person doing any waterskiing," he says. "When I came out of the water, I found out. I'd try to rub that foam and chemicals off my body." It was after one such waterskiing session that Westberry made his call to Savannah.

At the same time Westberry was taking his first steps toward enlisting outside assistance, no doubt hoping that once Ralph Nader's interest had been attracted by pollution he would pay attention to the larger problems in St. Marys, he was also attempting to alter the balance of local political power. The state elections held in 1970 provided an opportunity, and this opportunity Westberry was quick to exploit. Carl Drury was a 30-year-old physician who had grown up elsewhere in Camden County and moved to St. Marys in 1967. In 1970 he decided to run for a seat in the state legislature. As a doctor, he was one of the few people in the town who were not completely dependent on the mill; as the product of a well-established local family, he had an independent political base. The two men had quite

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different personalities—Westberry careful and deliberate, Drury ebullient and given to grand gestures—but at the time they had a shared political purpose. Dr. Drury's campaign provided a vehicle for Westberry's challenge to the established order in St. Marys, and Westberry, with his bulldog tenacity, kept turning up information that Dr. Drury could use.

Dr. Drury's opponent, the incumbent state legislator, was a man named Robert Harrison, whose personal history told a lot about the way St. Marys worked. Harrison was a lawyer, but it would be more accurate to say that he was *the* lawyer in St. Marys. In addition to serving in the legislature, he was the attorney for Gilman's St. Marys mill. At the same time, he served as attorney for the cities of St. Marys, Folkston, and Kingsland; for the local school board and the hospital authority; and for Camden and Charlton Counties. In other words, he had it all wrapped up. If a dispute arose over the mill's obligation for city or county taxes, Robert Harrison would speak for the mill—and for the city, and for the county. Because he also sat in the legislature, he could, for instance, promote legislation authorizing special tax agreements between a company and a town. His brother, Kenneth Harrison, published the major local paper.

In running against Robert Harrison, Carl Drury (with Wyman Westberry's help) made the Gilman Paper Company's influence, as personified by Robert Harrison, the issue in the campaign. He concentrated on the advantages the company enjoyed as a local taxpayer. Like so many companies that had moved their mills to the South during the Depression, Gilman had negotiated for favorable tax treatment from St. Marys. Under an agreement with the city signed in 1958, the mill was guaranteed that the valuation placed on its assets for property tax purposes would be permanently frozen at its 1958 level. (If the mill built new facilities, ten percent of their actual cost would be added to the valuation.) The same agreement provided that if the company bought any new land, the land would be totally exempt from city tax. Wyman Westberry later discovered that George Brumley had exploited this provision, by placing parcels of his own land in the company's name, to shield them from taxation.

Because of these agreements in the early 1970s, the mill's value was listed on the city tax digest as $3 million. On the Camden County digest—which had to be approved by the State of Georgia and was less directly under Gilman's control—the value was $15.4 million.

Wyman Westberry pointed out that despite its theoretically enormous tax base, the town had no sewer. Drury used other examples of the mill's influence. A story published in the *Atlanta Constitution* (after the election) illustrated the incestuous arrangements that Westberry and Dr. Drury were attacking. Jeff Nesmith wrote:

"An eight-room elementary school adjacent to the huge Gilman Paper Co. paper mill here was recently declared surplus property by the Camden County School Board.

Ten days before the election, Gilman's company doctor took Dr. Carl Drury aside and presented him with a choice: withdraw from his legislative race or be accused of raping a 16-year-old girl.

"At the same meeting, the board sold the school. There were no public bids. The sale price was $45,000. The buyer was the Gilman Paper Co. Three of the five members of the school board work for Gilman Paper Co.

"This week presentments published by the county grand jury complained that schools in Camden County are overcrowded.

"Using $147,000 in state grants, the county plans to construct eight brand new elementary school classrooms. Four of the new classrooms will be added to a school less than two blocks from the eight-room facility sold to Gilman Paper Co."

On September 9, 1970, the day of the primary election, Drury lost in St. Marys but had enough support elsewhere in the district, largely because of family ties, to take the Democratic nomination away from Harrison. In normal cases that would mean that the seat was his.

But this case was far from normal. Wyman Westberry and Carl Drury had successfully challenged one of the mill's long-assumed prerogatives, its political control; it was all but inevitable that there would be a counterattack. In the middle of October, just ten days before the general election in which his victory would be ratified, Dr. Drury learned what form the counterattack would take.

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He was approached by the company doctor for the Gilman plant, who presented Dr. Drury with a choice: he could leave town and withdraw from the election, or he could face an ugly scandal. Dr. Drury was told that Henry Bloodworth, another Gilman employee, was prepared to accuse him of rape. But Bloodworth would be willing to forget his charges if Dr. Drury disappeared. Carl Drury refused the offer. Henry Bloodworth thereupon presented an affadavit from his 16-year-old daughter, Suzanne, saying that Dr. Drury had tried to rape her when she was in the hospital recovering from a tonsillectomy.

For a moment, it looked as if the counterattack might succeed. Dr. Drury's medical license was immediately suspended. A grand jury was convened to look into the charges. Nonetheless, he managed to survive the general election, and in February 1971, as he took office as a legislator, the grand jury issued a report that cleared him of the charges. The report pointed out that Suzanne Bloodworth's friend, a supposed eyewitness to the attack, had been taken to Robert Harrison's office by Mr. Bloodworth and asked to sign an affadavit she had never read. The Camden County juvenile judge said that "a majority of the people in this county think this was a framed-up political deal."

Murder, Inc.

In the 18 months that followed Dr. Drury's election, the challenges that Wyman Westberry had orchestrated became dramatically more direct and effective. From his seat in the legislature Carl Drury was able to ask for investigation of Gilman's affairs, from taxes to pollution control. The director of the state water-quality agency, a gruff figure named Rock Howard, ordered Gilman to speed up its anti-pollution efforts. Georgia's attorney general ruled that the tax agreement between Gilman and St. Marys was unconstitutional. Then the legislature passed a law requiring that cities use the county tax valuations, which were approved by the state, in determining city taxes. This meant that Gilman's annual taxes in St. Marys would rise from about $45,000 to $227,000. A federal grand jury was convened to look into various irregularities in Camden County politics.

While these political challenges were proceeding, Westberry continued to attract outside attention to St. Marys. Stories about the situation, with titles like "The Mill that Runs a County," kept appearing in the Atlanta and Jacksonville papers. In the summer of 1971, Ralph Nader released a report called *The Water Lords*, of which I was the principal author, that made an unflattering comparison between Gilman's position in St. Marys and the way other companies behaved in other mill towns. In May 1972 Harrison Wellford and Peter Schuck, two of Ralph Nader's associates who had overseen the Water Lords project, published an article in *Harper's* about St. Marys called "Democracy and the Good Life in a Company Town." It concluded by saying, "The question, of course, is not whether Gilman has brought a measure of affluence to St. Marys, but why its citizens, unlike most other Americans, should be compelled to purchase this affluence at the cost of cherished political freedoms. Why, in short, does the mill not confine its activities to making paper?"

That same spring, Mike Wallace and his film crews from CBS's "60 Minutes" descended on St. Marys, tipped off to the story by Wellford and Schuck. Their report concentrated on taxes and Carl Drury's campaign. One of its highlights was an interview with George Brumley, who wore dark glasses throughout, spoke to Mike Wallace as he was accustomed to speaking to his employees, and generally confirmed by his bearing everything the reporters were trying to say about his attempts to dominate the town. *Newsweek* also carried a column describing the situation in St. Marys. With these doses of national publicity the stakes went up. The news of St. Marys even reached Manhattan, where the Gilman brothers, known

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for their refinement, found their family name identified with a squalid company town.

It was at this point that those who had enjoyed dominion in St. Marys for so many years apparently decided that something must be done. They could see regulators attacking, tax assessments soaring, reporters crawling over their backs. They may have realized that, for all the election-time publicity about Drury, Westberry had been at the center of it all. Westberry had launched his multiple attack upon the company, and the company would respond. The rape charge had not stopped Drury, so in this case stronger measures would be tried. According to evidence that convinced a federal jury to find three men guilty, that meant killing Westberry. The story went this way:

In the spring of 1972, when activity in the legislature was at its peak, Tommy Thomas spoke to Lawrence Brown at the Gilman plant. Brown was a towering black man who weighed 260 pounds; Thomas was a supervisor at the plant. Thomas said he would pay Brown $1,500 if Brown would kill Wyman Westberry.

Brown replied that he was worried. He didn't want to end up on a chain gang, or worse. Thomas told him to stop worrying; no jury in St. Marys, no jury made up of Gilman employees, would ever find him guilty. Brown said that wasn't good enough. He never could rest easy until he got reassurances from the top. He'd have to hear it from the "big man." As it turned out, there were other things on Lawrence Brown's mind that he didn't share with Tommy Thomas.

According to his later testimony, Brown never intended to go through with the deal at all. He was interested in only the money; once he got it, he'd skip town. But before doing so, he approached George Beaver, who worked in the same "lab" as Brown did at Gilman Paper. Beaver was a friend of Wyman Westberry, and Brown told him that he should let Westberry know that certain people wished him ill.

Beaver immediately told Westberry, who confronted Brown himself, and then drove with Brown across the state line to Florida. Once there, he called the FBI from a pay phone to tell them that he had a federal case to report, and a man standing alongside him who'd been hired to kill him. The FBI and its state counterpart, the Georgia Bureau of Investigation, swooped into St. Marys. They suited Brown up with body bugs to record his later conversations with Tommy Thomas. They started tapping phones.

Meanwhile, Brown continued his dealing with Tommy Thomas. A few days after the original proposal he was told to show up in the parking lot of a high school in a neighboring town. There he saw George Brumley, plus Tommy Thomas and Robert Harrison. He asked for reassurance that he'd be protected if things went wrong. He got a nod of assent from the big man, George Brumley himself.

On the strength of the evidence that had been gathered, a federal grand jury was convened to take testimony about the murder plot in May 1972. But at this point Lawrence Brown pulled his second switch. When his turn came to testify, Brown said that it had all been a mistake. There had never been a plot to kill Wyman Westberry. The only plotting had been done by Westberry and Drury, who had offered him $10,000 to tell ugly lies about Brumley, Harrison, and Thomas. Then, after the grand jury had finished with him, Brown returned to his original story. There *had* been a plot, he said, and the only reason he denied it before the grand jury was that the same men who hired him to do the killing threatened to kill him if he talked.

Federal and state investigators wrestled with the case through the summer but took no definite action. But in late summer, Jeff Nesmith of the *Atlanta Constitution* ferreted out news about the investigation. On September 19, 1972, the *Constitution* ran a story about Lawrence Brown and Wyman Westberry at the top of page one. The headline, which ran across all five columns, said, "Offered $1500 to Kill—Now He's Missing." The "he" referred to Brown, who could no longer be found.

According to testimony that later convinced a federal jury to find three men guilty, Gilman Paper Company officials hired one of their employees to kill Wyman Westberry.

To those who had been bedeviled by Wyman Westberry, this must have seemed the final straw. They had tried to shut him up by apparently hiring a killer—and then when Brown turned out to be a rat and the plans fell apart, Wyman Westberry remained very much alive. Surely they could at

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least do something to drive him away. Would it be so much to find grounds on which to fire him?

The effort to fire Westberry became, after the rape charge against Carl Drury and the alleged murder plot, the third wave of the company's counterattack. On September 26, 1972, seven days after the story in the *Atlanta Constitution,* Westberry discovered what the company's tactics would be.

"Dear Mr. Westberry:

"This is to advise you that effective immediately, you are terminated from your employment with the Gilman Paper Company. The reason for your discharge is that evidence has come to our attention that on or about March 21, 1970, you poured a substantial amount of toxic or acid-type liquid on a black construction employee who was then using what, until that date, had been a sanitary facility utilized exclusively by white employees. The black employee suffered first and second degree burns.

"The evidence of your culpability in this matter has just been brought to our attention.

"As you know, your general conduct has been a matter of grave concern to us, not the least of which is the controversy concerning Lawrence Brown. I understand that this and other matters are presently being investigated by appropriate government agencies, and I am confident that your involvement in these other matters ultimately will be resolved by the government agencies. I mention this to make it clear that you are being terminated only for the offense noted in paragraph one above and that we have not taken any other matter into consideration in our decision."

This was slightly too clever an approach. It was clever in attempting to besmirch Westberry in the one way surest to scare off his outside allies—the accusation that he was a violent racist. *Someone* in the Gilman plant was a violent racist, for two and a half years earlier someone had poured "white liquor" on a black man named Amos Rawls as he sat on a toilet, leaving Rawls with serious burns on his head and groin. But it was too much to tie Westberry to the incident. Over the previous two and a half years no one had identified him as a likely suspect. The government investigators had taken evidence and had given up; the company had closed the books. But then, the day after the *Atlanta Constitution* made the St. Marys murder plot front page news, new evidence came to light.

On that day, September 20, three letters were written, all of them accusing Westberry of the crime. One, sent to George Brumley, was from the mayor of St. Marys, the improbably named Richard Daley. Daley was a good-looking, ambitious young man, the labor movement's equiva-

The Washington Monthly Journalism Award

February 1982
is presented to
Gregory Gordon
United Press International

Gordon's five-part series, prepared with the assistance of the Better Government Association, is an exhaustive look at the federal government's program to dispose of its surplus property. Well-chosen and carefully documented case studies show a system riddled with costly delays and highly susceptible to pressures from state and local officials and private business interests. The result is that most surplus property is donated outright and much of what is actually sold fetches only a fraction of its true value.

Like most good investigative reporting, Gordon's account eschews sensationalism in favor of specifically describing how a government program not only fails to serve its purpose, but wastes millions of dollars in the process.

For a copy of Gordon's articles, contact the Better Government Association, 1901 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W. Suite 301, Washington, D.C. 20006.

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lent of a Jaycee. In addition to his civic duties, he was president of the electricians union, traditionally the most docile of the three unions that operated at the plant. Daley said in his letter that another member of his union, L.N. McGhin Jr., had just come up with evidence that Wyman Westberry was the man who had burned Amos Rawls. The second letter, also to Brumley, came from a second union president, Jerry Ridenour of the Pulp and Sulfite Paper Mill Workers. Ridenour had also heard from McGhin. In his letter Ridenour enclosed letter number three, a statement from McGhin himself, saying that he'd heard certain black workers voice suspicions about Westberry.

The charges were obviously concocted, but for the moment that didn't matter: Westberry was out of a job. Men had been laid off as grumblers before, and they had never returned. Ineffective as it might have been in its other counterattacks, this time the company scored.

Full Court Press

Wyman Westberry was pressed to the wall, virtually exiled in his own city. The large-scale injustices he had complained about were now visited directly on him. At this point he was driven to a third scheme of attack. He had worked first with outside allies and second with local politicians; now he turned to the courts. There he began a protracted legal struggle for survival, and revenge, that stretched over the next four years.

The first step was to try to get his job back. Westberry made the gesture of appealing through Gilman's in-house complaint system. Once that appeal had been denied, he appealed to authorities outside St. Marys. Westberry's union, Local 1128 of the International Association of Machinists, traditionally had been the most independent of the unions that operated at the mill. At a union meeting where Westberry explained his case, the union voted to take his case before a federal arbitrator. Westberry hired his own lawyer, a 30-year-old labor specialist named Fletcher Farrington, to represent him at the hearing—and also to file a $2,225,000 damage suit in federal court against the hierarchy of St. Marys. The suit was directed against the Gilman company and the three familiar figures, George Brumley, Robert Harrison, and Tommy Thomas. It asked damages on grounds that they had "conspired among themselves to deprive plaintiff of his life."

The "white liquor" arbitration didn't begin until May 1973, eight months after Westberry had lost his job. The company presented its witnesses, who claimed one after another that they'd always known Wyman Westberry was the culprit. It was only coincidence, they said, that all the letters incriminating Westberry were written on the same day, two and a half years after the original event. Fletcher Farrington tore into every witness, challenging them for indications that they'd ever tried to communicate their suspicions or that the company had ever questioned them about Westberry before the story of the alleged murder plot broke in the *Atlanta Constitution*.

On January 21, 1976, the jurors filed back into the courtroom to announce their verdict: all defendants guilty on all counts. In St. Marys the verdict's effect was comparable to the dethroning of a king.

Three months later, in August, the federal arbitrator came down resoundingly on Westberry's side. There was not one bit of evidence, he said, that the company had ever considered Westberry the culprit before the fateful day, September 20. It was clear to the arbitrator that Wyman Westberry had been "unjustly dismissed." In compensation, the company was ordered not only to give him his job back but also to restore his benefits and seniority and to make up for all his lost pay.

The spirit in which the company received this decision may be suggested by its response. Two months passed. The first anniversary of Westberry's dismissal came and went, and still Gilman made no move to put Westberry back on the job. On October 1, 1973, Farrington went to the U.S. District Court in Savannah and asked that Gilman be ordered to comply with the arbitrator's order within 24 hours. That afternoon, Westberry's phone started ringing; would it be convenient for him to begin work the next day? Westberry said that it would, and on October 2 he walked back onto the job.

That left the question of back pay. When Westberry was rehired, a lawyer called Farrington to report the company's offer: $3,000 for a year's lost pay. On hearing this, Westberry sent Farrington straight back to court to ask for an order

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Contract Measure Backed

—GILMAN PAPER COMPANY—

3 Indicted In St. Marys Case

By JOE CALDWELL
Journal Staff Writer

A federal grand jury in Savannah, Ga., has charged three men, including a former state legislator, with inducing a witness to give false statements to federal officials and the jury about allegations that a St. Marys, Ga., man was induced to kill a Gilman Paper Co. employe.

Indicted were George W. Brumley, former executive vice president of Gilman Paper Company's pulp mill in St. Marys; Robert W. Harrison, attorney for Gilman's Georgia affairs and former state legislator; and William T. Thomas, an employe of Gilman Paper Co.

The indictment said Brumley, Harrison and Thomas induced Lawrence E. Brown of St. Marys to testify before the federal grand jury in Savannah, which convened May 18, 1972, to information "which neither Brumley, Harrison, Thomas nor Brown believed to be true."

Harrison

The indictment said effect that Beaver, Westberry and one Carl M. Drury offered Brown $10,000 to state that Harrison, Brumley and Thomas offered Brown $1,500 to kill Westberry.

It further states that Brumley, Harrison and Brown stated under oath before the grand jury foreman "that he would testify truly to material matters in which the grand jury was concerned."

That testimony was "as to the material fact . . . whether Brumley, Harrison and Thomas offered Brown a sum of money to kill Wyman Westberry."

The indictment states that Brown testified to the grand jury that he never was offered a sum of money by Brumley, Harrison and Thomas to kill Westberry.

Count two against Brumley, Harrison and Thomas charges that the three "did knowingly and willfully use a false and fictitious document, knowing that the document contained a false material statement."

The indictment states that on or about May 31, 1972 the three "caused George A. Beaver to make a false and fictitious affidavit . . . to the Thomas "knowingly and willfully used such false fictitious statement by causing such statement of Beaver to be delivered to the U.S. attorney for the Southern District of Georgia."

Brumley

Count three charges that Thomas made a false statement to agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation on May 24, 1972 in St. Marys, after both agents P. Jones and [illegible] offered Brown $1,500 to kill Westberry."

It further states that Thomas' statement to the agents "were fictitious and false" and that Thomas knew that Brown had never made such a statement to Thomas.

The fourth count, also against Thomas, states that Thomas, while being interviewed by FBI special agents David B. Cook and Louis P. Jones on June 10, 1972 made false statements about the reason for Brown's travels to Vero Beach, Fla., on May 11, 1972, and his stay in that area between May 12 and 15, 1972.

According to the indictment, Thomas told the agents that Thomas and Brown traveled to Vero Beach and remained there to "protect" Brown.

"Said statement by Thomas to agents Jones and Cook was fictitious and false as Thomas then and false as knew that the circumstances and reasons for the journeys and stays in Florida was to subern and instigate, induce and procure said Brown to commit perjury when testifying before the grand jury meet [illegible] federal

—ZONING CODE REVIEW—

Urges Input From Blacks

By REG CROWDER
Governmental Affairs Staff

Former Zoning Board member Charles Brooks today said the joint committee currently reviewing [illegible] problem of the actual application of the zoning code, not how the code is written," Mrs. Crabb said. "I don't think going over the [illegible] cations [illegible] Council Urban Affairs Committee. The [illegible]

Economic Opportunity's inflation garden program. (Journal Photo by Rocco Morabito)

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compelling a more reasonable offer. The judge concurred once again, and once again the company was forced to bow. Eventually Westberry received some $15,000 in back pay.

To those who had followed the case, at close range in St. Marys or from a distance, as I did in Washington, this outcome was simply astonishing. Someone had challenged the gods—and *won*. When he was fired, his enemies might have considered it good riddance to a traitor; his friends saw him as a heroic martyr, but a martyr all the same. Now he had come back from his martyrdom, demonstrating that it was possible to fight back and survive.

"It was a good feeling, to come back here," Westberry said. "A lot of people had felt there's no way under the sun you can beat those people, with all the power they've got. It felt good to show them that as long as you're right, there's some justice in the world. What amazes me about people in general, when something happens to them and you talk to them about getting a lawyer and going to court, they say, 'Oh, it's just not worth it.' Well, I wanted to show them that was wrong."

Yet this was not the end of Westberry's legal assault. His suit charging Brumley et al. with conspiracy to kill him had been thrown out by the district court judge in Savannah, on grounds that federal courts did not have jurisdiction in such a case. On January 22, 1975, a little more than a year after Westberry returned to his job, the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals reversed that decision; let the conspiracy suit proceed, it said. One week later, the impact of this ruling was registered in a notice posted inside the Gilman plant:

"It is with deep regret that the Board of Directors announces that George W. Brumley has decided to take early retirement, effective February 1, 1975."

Robert Harrison also resigned as counsel for Gilman Paper. When the conspiracy case went to court, he and Brumley would not be appearing as official representatives of the company.

As it happened, their day in court never came. The company's attorneys—who by now were dealing direct from Manhattan, no longer leaving the Westberry negotiations to the local talent—offered to settle the case. Westberry accepted, for a sum that has never been publicly disclosed. But even though the trial was aborted, it had done what mattered: the man most responsible for the set-up in St. Marys, George Brumley, and the man in position to help him most, Robert Harrison, had been driven from their positions. Whatever else happened in St. Marys, they would never again have the tools with which to dominate the town.

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Yet if Brumley and Harrison thought that they finally had tasted the worst of Wyman Westberry's medicine, they soon discovered that they were wrong. In October 1975, eight months after George Brumley's resignation, Brumley and Robert Harrison were indicted by a federal grand jury. Along with Tommy Thomas, they were ordered to stand trial on federal charges that arose from the alleged conspiracy to murder Wyman Westberry.

The reason for this development was that Wyman Westberry's influence, direct and indirect, had reached even into the U.S. Department of Justice. The Justice department had looked into allegations about the murder plot once before, in 1972, and had decided to do nothing, mainly because the star witness, Brown, kept changing his story every week. But Westberry kept sending documents to attorneys general John Mitchell and Edward Levi, assistant attorney general Henry Peterson, and J. Stanley Pottinger, head of the civil rights division of the Justice department. He made repeated late-night phone calls to (among others) Harrison Wellford, co-author of the *Harper's* article, who on leaving Nader had become an aide to Senator Philip Hart.

Westberry understood that with the local balance of power stacked in favor of the other side, he had to look for help from powerful outsiders.

Westberry's badgering could be a nuisance—as those interested in his case have learned over the years. (His lawyer Fletcher Farrington even called him "pestiferous.") But his persistence—which could seem so exasperating to those of us not on the scene—was also one of the secrets of his success. During a chance encounter in Washington early in 1975, Wellford buttonholed Stanley Pottinger and asked whatever became of the St. Marys case. Pottinger sent a "tickler" down through the channels of his organization, asking the same question. At the other end of the tickler was Steven Horn, a 28-year-old attorney who eventually put the pieces of the case together in convincing enough fashion to win an indictment from a grand jury.

At the trial, the defense lawyers did everything possible to discredit Lawrence Brown's credibility as a witness. "He could tell 45 lies to 45 people and keep them straight," Westberry's friend George Beaver said privately of Brown—and he was on Brown's side. Steven Horn, managing the prosecution, replied that if the case rested on Brown's word, he'd ask for a verdict of not guilty. The clinching evidence seemed to be the recording made by Lawrence Brown's "body bug." It captured a meeting between Brown and Tommy Thomas, in which Brown said, "I'm ready, I'm ready for him" and Thomas replied that he had to "cool it" because the FBI was in town. The defense did not attempt to rebut the tape recording, or even mention it, through the rest of the trial.

The case was sent to the jury on the morning of January 21, 1976. That same afternoon, the jurors filed back into the courtroom to announce their verdict: all defendants guilty on all counts.

In St. Marys, the effect was comparable to the impeachment of a president, the dethroning of a king. "There was a sense of shock," said a man who had recently moved there to work for one of the utility companies. "And then almost dancing in the street when the idea sunk in that *he* [Brumley] was going to jail."

Once again, there was a legal anticlimax. Brumley, Harrison, and Thomas appealed their convictions, and the start of their year-and-a-day prison sentences was postponed until the appeal was decided. In October 1977, three judges of the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals unanimously overturned the conviction and directed that all three defendants be acquitted. Their ruling was based mainly on reinspection of the evidence; after reading through the trial transcript, they found Lawrence Brown's testimony too weak to support conviction.

By the time this news reached St. Marys, though, it no longer really mattered. George Brumley was not going to jail, but neither was he coming back to St. Marys. His days as the big man were finished, and in the town he had once dominated some fundamental changes were beginning.

Brumley returned to his retirement home in Sea Island, Georgia, a resort up the coast from St. Marys. His place at the mill was taken by William Davis, long his assistant, who practiced a more conventional version of company-civic relations. Robert Harrison quietly resumed his law practice but kept his distance from local politics. Lawrence Brown became a deputy sheriff(!) in another Georgia town.

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In 1976, when Richard Daley ran for reelection as mayor, he won by fewer than 100 votes. In 1978, he lost to Alvin Dickey, a rawboned, salt-of-the-earth character who, as a shrimper, had always been independent of the mill and aggrieved about its water pollution. A new city council came in with him, of which Westberry's buddy Russell Tyre was a member. The council voided the previous tax agreements the city had made with Gilman, including a contract drawn up under Mayor Daley's auspices in 1975 after the state had ruled the previous tax agreements unconstitutional. The council started out asking Gilman for $900,000 in back tax payments; it finally agreed to accept $300,000. Under constant pressure from the state, the company has greatly reduced its air and water pollution.

"There's a far more relaxed atmosphere in the town, and at work," Tyre said while he was on the council. "If people have gripes, they're not *afraid* to stand up and gripe. In the last two years, we've circulated a petition to do something about pollution. Two hundred people signed it, including some salaried supervisors. Ten years ago, you could have held a gun on a salaried supervisor and not get him to sign."

There was one other change in St. Marys, which guaranteed that all the other changes could never be reversed. Through the early 1970s, the U.S. navy laid plans for its fleet of enormous Trident submarines, each one of which would carry 24 nuclear missiles. The navy planned to base some of the Tridents on the West Coast, in Puget Sound; in December 1976, it announced that Tridents also would be based at King's Bay, Georgia, just outside St. Marys. New facilities would be built. Subcontractors would locate their offices nearby. By the early 1980s, the project would bring some 5,000 new people to town. Eventually as many as 30,000 might come to Camden County.

The boom that the navy brought to St. Marys gave the town what it most desperately needed: the economic diversity that gives human beings a choice. Instead of bullying people into compliance, the mill has to compete for their loyalty against other bidders. That simple fact has changed everything else about the town.

"There's competition in the labor market now," Carroll Myers, who spent his working life with Gilman until he retired with a disability, said in 1980. "Now you can go work for the navy if all you need's a job. Before, they could tell you, if you don't like it, *leave*. They let Brumley run things, and there was so much power I think he got obsessed with it. They can't do that any more."

A Theory of Justice

As Wyman Westberry drives from his house to the plant each day, he can pass the house where Henry Bloodworth has lived ever since his daughter accused Carl Drury of rape. Driving by, Westberry sees the new woodwork and siding that was installed at the Bloodworth house shortly after Suzanne Bloodworth swore out her affidavit. If he turns the opposite way at the end of his street, perhaps to head toward Antoinette's restaurant for breakfast, he can tell whether Robert Harrison is in his office by checking for the brown Cadillac parked outside.

One evening in 1980 as Westberry was preparing to put his boat into the river, I noticed a grimace cross his face. He nodded toward a man standing a few feet away and told me to take a look at him. "That's Buddy McGhin," he said as the man passed out of earshot—the man who testified nearly a decade earlier that he saw Westberry throw "white liquor" onto Amos Rawls. When we reached Westberry's home, he pulled a document from a pile next to the couch. The paper was a Gilman Paper Company announcement, dated February 24, 1977, announcing that Buddy McGhin had been promoted to "permanent salaried employee as a supervisor." "That would have come maybe 20 years down the road, without the

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white liquor," Westberry said. "I pity him for being so weak. But I also feel that if he'd been man enough to stand up to these people, a lot of this would never have happened."

Westberry has made his peace with some of his former antagonists. In 1972, when Jerry Ridenour was president of the Pulp and Paper Workers Union, he wrote one of the letters to George Brumley accusing Westberry of throwing white liquor. "I fell into the error of believing idle gossip," Ridenour told me eight years later. "I was told something about Wyman, and I checked it out and thought it was authentic. Later on I found out that it was all a lie." Westberry's reputation within his own union is such that in the fall of 1981, without opposition, he was elected president of Local 1128 of the International Association of Machinists.

Others in town seem unsure how to regard him. His position is somewhat comparable to that of a man who has beaten cancer. Everyone is impressed, but some are uneasy. "You can't take anything away from Wyman," one of his friends told me. "But the difference between Wyman and me is that I've got a family."

This Westberry concedes. "I thank God it was me they picked on in the labor movement. I had accumulated some money. I was in a position to fight back."

True, Wyman Westberry was in a better position to be brave than most people in St. Marys. He had no wife and children, whose welfare might deter him from sticking out his neck. He didn't have to worry how he'd feed the children if he lost his job, or what his wife would do if he were killed. He had built up a savings account and was not saddled with debt. He could withstand one full year with no pay without being driven into submission.

But something more than being in the right position was involved in Wyman Westberry's victory. No matter how well situated he might have been, he would not now be living evidence that one man can change a system unless he had been unusually skillful in interweaving three strategies of reform.

The first was his understanding that, when the local balance of power was stacked in favor of the other side, he had to look for help from powerful outsiders. In the army, this meant appealing to Senator Richard Russell. In St. Marys, it meant enlisting Ralph Nader, the *Atlanta Constitution*, CBS News, and others whose base of support lay outside the influence of the Gilman Paper Company. These people could speak to a wider audience than Westberry himself could ever reach, and a fraction of the power they enjoyed nationally might be imported into St. Marys, where it could help offset the forces that were dominant inside the town.

Westberry constantly coupled that approach with his second effort, which was to do everything possible to affect the local balance of power. Many "reformers" with the burning zeal of a Westberry lack the personality, the family history, and the other ingredients that give a politician his appeal. Recognizing that they themselves stand no chance of being elected, they tend to give up on electoral politics as a means of reform. Westberry understood that the trick is to find someone who does have the politician's gifts and then use him as a vehicle for your cause. Carl Drury and Wyman Westberry barely knew each other before Drury's campaign. But Westberry saw that Drury had the right ingredients—family connections, a professional income independent of Gilman—and that the campaign was an opportunity that could not be missed. He knew the same thing about Alvin Dickey, the shrimper who became mayor of St. Marys. The twist is that in the end Westberry's own political standing had risen so dramatically he was elected president of his union.

Finally, Wyman Westberry understood that ultimately he might have to turn to the courts. No one in St. Marys was going to tell the officials to give him back his job, or admit the white liquor case was a frame-up, or say that powerful men simply could not get away with plotting to kill an employee. Those messages could come only from outside the city, and they could be enforced only through the power of the state. That was why Westberry appealed to the federal arbitrator and the federal court. Less scrupulous "reformers" have clogged the court schedules, and the wheels of industry, by filing nuisance suits and crying discrimination whenever someone makes an unpopular decision. The difference with Wyman Westberry is that he did not take the step toward litigation until he had endured injustice of the most extreme sort, in the form of an apparent murder plot against him and the denial of his livelihood. However cumbersome or misguided the legal system at other times may be, at this point there was majesty in the law.

Wyman Westberry draws from his struggles in St. Marys the same moral he took from the army mess hall episode: if you struggle long enough, and you are right, justice will eventually be done. Other men's experience with life has left them with darker conclusions, but Wyman Westberry's cannot be dismissed, for he has laid out all the steps, and he has proven that they can work. □

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Memo of the Month

INTRA-CAMPUS MEMORANDUM

To: University Faculty and Staff

Date: February 16, 1982

From: C. Robert Kemble CRK

Subject: Recruitment and Retention

Since October a special committee on recruitment/retention has worked at my request on a critical reappraisal of our current operation and total system with an eye toward better coordination and interface between the primary sub functions. This committee, chaired by the Dean of Faculties, consisted of the Vice President for Academic Affairs, Vice President for Student Affairs, Dean of Academic Services, Dean of the College of Education, and Dean of the College of Health and Behavioral Sciences.

After two months of frequent meetings and indepth, candid reviews the committee has made certain recommendations to me. We are now in the process of following up on the implementation of some suggested adjustments.

One of the points most strongly emphasized by the study committee is the need to remind the entire staff and faculty that recruitment/retention, with a goal toward making Lamar a better university, must have first-level priority now and for the next several years.

Let me take the occasion of this report to remind you that an effective program of this scope necessarily involves the entire campus community. It must depend upon the general, enthusiastic support of all of us in whatever form the individual faculty or staff member interfaces with students and potential students. And we all do influence potential students, either directly and indirectly.

We have made some modest achievement and need to continue that progress. I will appreciate your continued attention to this objective.

CRK/hs

Lamar University

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How the Media Made th

by Tina Rosenberg

God knows, Jerry Falwell and the Moral Majority get around. In 1980 it was four-part newspaper and television stories about how he delivered votes along with his sermons. Today it's alarmist direct mail solicitations from liberals seeing red. Tomorrow it might be. . . .

Well, it might be yet another boring analysis of Jerry Falwell. Whether he looks to you like Mayor Daley or Attila the Hun (or Jesus Christ, for that matter), the man has become something of a soporific cliche. The editors of this magazine tell me they rejected dozens of manuscripts

Tina Rosenberg is a Chicago writer.

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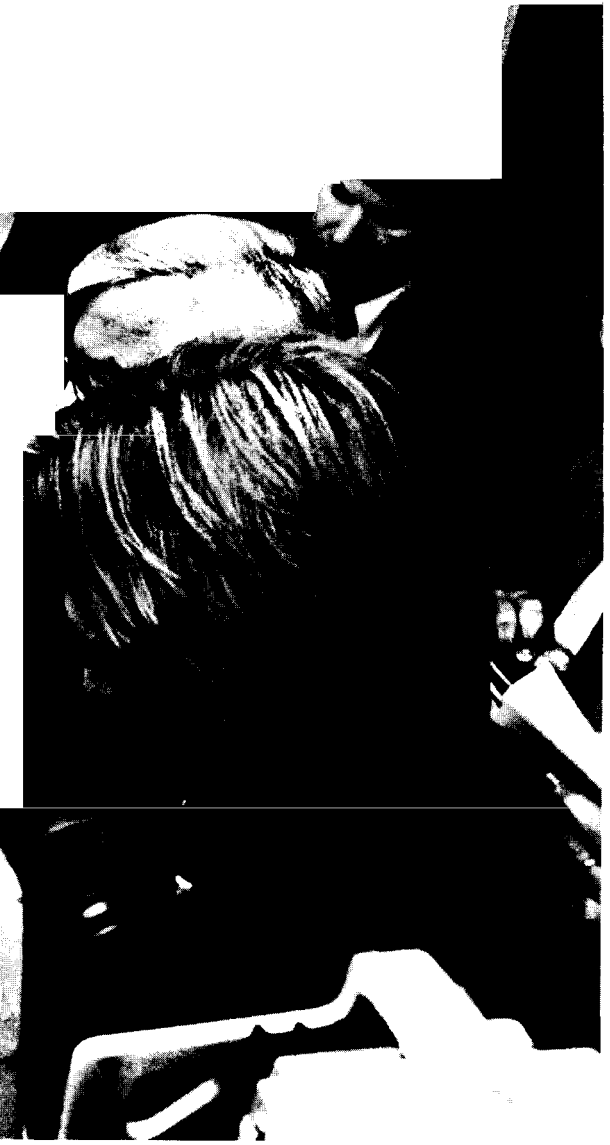

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Moral Majority

about Falwell and company last year. Overcovered, they thought.

But that the Moral Majority is yesterday's news begs a more interesting question: Why was it major news at all? Or to put it more accurately, why is it still considered such a big deal? To understand the reason for even asking that question, give this simple quiz a try:

The Moral Majority contains how many members?

A. Two million

B. 400,000

If you answered two million, you've probably been reading the newspapers and junk mail a bit too closely (the particular figure comes from a 1980 story in *U.S. News and World Report*). By contrast, the measly 400,000 number, closer to the truth, is from a different source: the communications director of the Moral Majority itself, a man named Cal Thomas.

Let's try another question.

How many television viewers watch Falwell's "Old Time Gospel Hour" every week?

A. 25 million

B. 1.4 million

The 25 million figure is from a June 30, 1980 article by Lisa Myers in *The Washington Star* that kicked off the widespread Falwell coverage that year. Myers, foreshadowing what was to become conventional wisdom, wrote that Falwell was "the second most watched TV personality in the country, surpassed only by Johnny Carson." The 1.4 million figure, by contrast, is from Nielson and Arbitron ratings, which even then placed Falwell as the sixth most watched religious broadcaster in America, behind such luminaries as Jimmy Swaggert.

Such gross statistical errors could be dismissed if they were isolated examples. Unfortunately, they were not. Like the body counts during the Vietnam war, they are part of a larger pattern of exaggerations, distortions, and oversimplifications that has characterized most of the press coverage of Falwell and the Moral Majority. What should have been portrayed as a relatively new social and political development of modest size and power was transformed into a nearly invincible juggernaut that seemed to be

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on the verge of overwhelming American life. It doesn't matter if one considers Falwell a prophet or a hypocrite; he and his movement have been the beneficiaries of one of the biggest hype jobs in recent memory.

I don't want to overstate the case—the Moral Majority is an important and newsworthy phenomenon. Falwell has effectively tapped a responsive chord in millions of Americans concerned that decency and morality are disappearing from the national scene. He has addressed issues and deep-seated feelings that liberal politicians have ignored at their own peril. And he has done so in a narrow and irresponsible way that merits exposure.

Falwell has also shown a shrewd understanding of the fundamentals of political organization. His group has strength far beyond its numbers because it has focused its political activities in primary campaigns and at the local level, where a few activities can still make a big difference. A thousand hard-working volunteers often can influence more votes than a $1 million campaign chest. Falwell has both. His direct-mail fund-raising efforts have raised millions, and the Moral Majority has been rightfully credited with some notable political victories. Falwell's group now dominates the Alaska Republican party. The Moral Majority played a key role in electing Jeremiah Denton to the U. S. Senate from Alabama.

But is Falwell a man whose movement has the "potential for destruction of our political, religious, and legal institutions," as a recent mailing from the National Abortion Rights Action League warns? Hardly. Not only are his hordes far smaller than we've been led to believe, but they hold political views that make them a minority even within their own religious community. A little-noticed Gallup poll last year discovered that most evangelical Christians favor the ERA, oppose a "Right to Life" Amendment, and are registered Democrats. Yet in all too many news stories, the terms "religious" and "right wing" have been used interchangeably. The generic use of the term "moral majority" has not only besmirched millions of devout Christians who disagree with Falwell, it has imbued his organization with far more power than it could legitimately claim on its own.

News Hole Trinity

Falwell's undeserved notoriety is best understood by examining a strange relationship that has developed among three groups: the Moral Majority, its liberal antagonists, and the press. Each party has a powerful interest in letting exaggeration and oversimplification pass for gospel truth.

The Moral Majority's stake in this is obvious. Undeserved publicity may create new enemies, but it also attracts new members. Having your mortal foe trumpet your influence reassures existing members of your importance. And, as Falwell knows, power is a self-perpetuating commodity. Had ABC News known how paltry Falwell's TV audience really was, chances are he wouldn't have appeared on its special Emmy Award-winning "Nightline" the day after the November 1980 election, analyzing election returns in the company of President-elect Reagan and defeated Senators George McGovern, Birch Bayh, and Frank Church.

As for the liberals, many find it more appealing to treat Falwell like the Darth Vader of American politics rather than debunk his claims. Falwell didn't cost the Democrats control of the U.S. Senate, but he sure makes a convenient scapegoat. Some defeated liberals understandably found it easier to portray themselves as the victims of powerful religious fanatics than to blame their losses on the other factors.

Since 1980 Falwell has proven one of the liberals' most effective weapons in their effort to recoup their losses. As liberal fundraiser Roger Craver says, "You always need a devil to succeed in the direct mail business. . . we sure have one now." Membership and fundraising for liberal organizations jumped dramatically last year. A full-page ad in major newspapers across the country sponsored by the ACLU warning that "If the Moral Majority has its way, you'd better start praying," netted $100,000 in its first month, one of the most successful solicitations in the group's history. Even the publishing industry has latched on. A 1949 book called *The Philosophy of Humanism* by Corliss Lamont has been reissued this year with a new introduction attacking the Moral Majority.

The means by which Falwell and company became liberal foils in the first place is, of course, a product of the third and most important ingredient in the group's high visibility: the national press. The press's infatuation with Falwell in the last couple of years is based on more than his punchy, outrageous quotes, which are so well-suited for lead paragraphs and 20-second clips on the evening news. Falwell's larger importance has been to fill a need for the press, a need to find a symbol of a new phenomenon that reporters aren't comfortable with. The result is participation in a peculiar kind of symbiotic

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ritual. This ritual helps explain how the Moral Majority has burrowed its way into the American imagination: Falwell wants attention, liberals want an ogre, the press wants a good story. Whenever all parties want the same thing, they tend to get it, whether they deserve it or not.

Stairway to Media Heaven

Jerry Falwell's media career started in 1956. After his services every Sunday in the Thomas Road Baptist Church in Lynchburg, Virginia, Falwell would hurry to a nearby television station and preach again for a local TV audience. In 1968 he cut his workload in half simply by putting cameras in his own church and broadcasting his services live.

During the 1970s Falwell's activities became more political. He started his "I Love America" rallies. Later he joined forces with Phyllis Schlafly and Anita Bryant for "Clean Up America" rallies. These gatherings were a mix of preaching, choir music, American flags, patriotic decorations, and an occasional patriotic politician like Senator Jesse Helms or Senator Paul Laxalt.

Before then the only notices Falwell received from the press tended to be buried in the fifth paragraph of the weekly religion announcements. But as Falwell became more political, the media began paying more attention. A 1978 *Washington Post* article by Megan Rosenfeld noted that Falwell's church was fast becoming a regular way station for conservative politicians. "The reason for their pilgrimage here is somewhat obscure," Rosenfeld wrote, "but senatorial candidates Andrew P. Miller and John W. Warner encouraged a budding tradition in Viriginia politics when they attended services yesterday at the Rev. Jerry Falwell's Thomas Road Baptist Church."

> Falwell has been the beneficiary of a phenomenon with which political journalists should be especially familiar: what's described as powerful often ends up being powerful.

Esquire tried to focus on the juicier, political side of Falwell in an October 10, 1978 article called "The Next Billy Graham." "The name is Jerry Falwell. He may be the first preacher to become a political leader," the article exclaimed. This hype aside—hadn't writer Mary Murphy heard of a man named Martin Luther King?—the story didn't delve into Falwell's politicking. In fact, it quoted him as saying, "I stay totally on spiritual issues. I don't talk politics."

It wasn't until June 30, 1980 that Falwell became a full-fledged political power. He made his debut in style in a four-part series starting on the front page of the Sunday *Washington Star*. Writer Lisa Myers hadn't set out to discover a trend. She simply had heard something about the "I Love America" rallies from her father, who mentioned it looked political. The first people she called to inquire about Falwell and his followers were surprised she even was interested. "But I took them seriously," she says. "I looked at their resources, especially the communications resources they had. The Democratic and Republican National Committees don't have their own TV network."

It was in her final article—a profile of Falwell—that Myers described his television audience of 25 million. The church itself was the source for the bogus statistics, and none of the other religious broadcasters Myers interviewed disputed the claim. "I basically assumed people are going to exaggerate, but at the time, I didn't know much about television," says Myers, who moved over to NBC News after the *Star* folded. "I didn't know how to check it."

No matter. Statistical precision wasn't nearly as important as the sheer novelty of Myers's story. A heretofore unnoticed mass of millions of Bible-toting conservatives rearing up in self-righteous rage—from a journalist's viewpoint, it was manna. The stampede was on.

One week after Myers's first story, ABC ran a four-minute segment on the evening news about the "moral machine" of Jerry Falwell. The segment was not meant to run so soon, but according to reporter Susan King, ABC pushed up the date after the *Star* piece appeared. The logic, King recalls, was that if ABC didn't act fast

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We're doing what has to be done.

Highway Death Traps.

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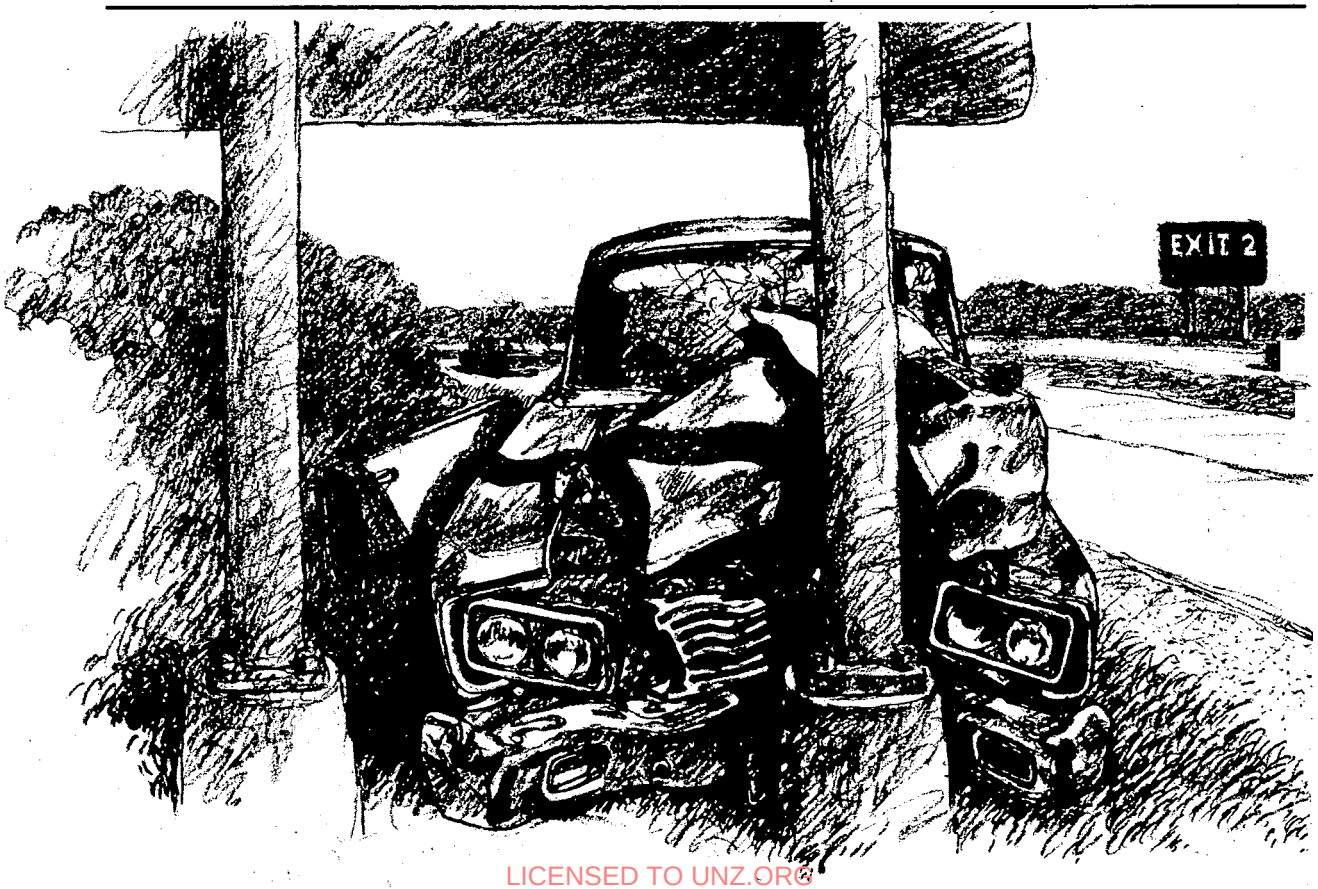

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Five college students were driving home on semester break. Their car went out of control and crashed into a signpost on an Illinois highway. The car was torn in two by the rigid steel. Two students were killed outright, three were injured.

Astonishingly, *the sign was left in place* after the accident. Three years later, another crash ... into the same signpost. This time, two people were critically injured.

Finally, after the second crash, a new sign on breakaway posts and set back from the edge of the pavement was substituted.

Auto crashes constitute a crisis in public health. They injure more than *five million* and kill over 50,000 Americans each year. This toll can be lowered by improving safety features in automobiles and by convincing Americans to drive more carefully. But the environment in which people drive also must be improved ... we must make our roads and highways safer.

America's roadsides, including those along the most modern high-speed expressways, are lined with boobytraps: concrete bridge abutments, stub-ended guardrails, large trees, rigid signposts, utility and telephone poles, and others that turn minor mishaps into major crashes that needlessly kill and injure vehicle occupants.

Problems Identified

Technical solutions to the roadside hazard problem have existed for years, but they have not been sufficiently utilized. That's why property-casualty insurance companies fund and support the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety. IIHS is an independent, scientific organization that identifies what is hurting and killing people in crashes and suggests what can be done to reduce the toll.

The IIHS has taken an active part in identifying roadside hazards. For example, it helped highway officials determine road conditions that need engineering changes. Researchers studied road characteristics, such as curvature and grade at fatality sites, as well as the locations of roadside hazards. Then they compared these findings with conditions on roads where fatalities had not occurred. Result? Partly because of IIHS programs, federal funds were allocated for the dismantling of existing roadside hazards and their replacement with safer structures.

Legal Options Examined

Another IIHS contribution: Institute staff and law firm personnel analyzed the legal liability of public and private organizations, and the personal liability of state and local officials, contractors, designers, and others responsible for roadside hazards. This definitive work examines strategies for employing federal and state law to prevent or remove roadside hazards, and it describes the legal options available for forcing their removal and preventing their future construction or reconstruction.

Many people are unaware of highway boobytraps. Property-casualty insurance companies believe that the more publicity and discussion there is of this problem, the closer we will be to implementing solutions.

And we want to see this problem solved. Our primary concern is to save lives and reduce injuries wherever possible. But, safer highways also *can* help to reduce losses and to slow the rise in the cost of insurance.

And that's an objective we all share.

We're working to keep insurance affordable.

This message presented by the **American Insurance Association,** 85 John Street, NY, NY 10038

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it would look like it was playing catch-up. Other news organizations took the same attitude. When one Christian Right group held a national affairs briefing in late August, CBS, NBC, and *The New York Times* all used it as a news peg. To keep the trend moving, the prose became even more breathless and hyperbolic.

But it wasn't until August 17 that the story became certified. Certification, in the news business, means the front page of *The New York Times*. Once a trend appears there, it is sure to end up on the networks and in news magazines and newspapers around the country. "Ultra-conservative Evangelicals a Surging New Force in Politics," the *Times* headline blared. By the last installment of this four-part series, Falwell was in the company of Teddy Roosevelt and Thomas Jefferson. Dudley Clendinen wrote: "It may be, in the 14 months since he founded the Moral Majority, that Mr. Falwell, a preacher, has done something unprecedented in the nation's political history. Mr. Falwell has created something very similar to a political party."

Over at NBC, special segment producer Tom Wolzien was already cracking. Correspondent Mark Nykanen's piece ran on Tuesday, August 19, day three of the *Times* series. Three days later CBS correspondent David Dick interviewed Falwell for his story on the national affairs briefing.

Not to be outdone, the news magazines were the next to get into the act. On September 15 newsstand browsers could choose between two major stories on Falwell. A headline on *U.S. News and World Report*'s cover asked, "Preachers in Politics, Decisive Force in the 80s?" The hedged bet on the outside contrasted with the purple prose inside. The opening paragraph: "A political holy war without precedent is in full swing in this country. At stake are the loyalties of a huge legion of voters who could determine the November elections—millions of born-again Christians."

Newsweek was less dramatic in its coverage but more creative. The teaser on the table of contents page talked about "the Reverend Jerry Falwell, whose televised appeals are reaching 18 million every week." In a demonstration of the magic of television (and news magazines), Falwell gained three million viewers between page two and page 35, where the number of faithful TV watchers was put at 21 million.

Perhaps the high water mark occurred in a January 1981 article by Johnny Greene in *Playboy*. This article credited Falwell with "as many as 30 million" television viewers. It also painted an ominous scenario of life with the New Right in power. Greene's happy conclusion: "Daily life in America would be unrecognizable unless one compared it with the now-familiar scenes of daily life in Iran under the Ayatollah Khomeini."

CBS passed on Falwell's bogus claim that the Moral Majority helped register 14 million fundamentalist voters in 1980. Even Richard Viguerie claimed only 2.5 million.

The Greatest Story Ever Told

Of course the mere fact that the story was covered isn't objectionable by itself; there was something out there, and the press went after it. But the tone of the stories and the inaccurate facts they contained had the cumulative effect of exaggerating the movement's impact. Reporters had a responsibility to do more than simply quote Falwell's claims, as Rita Flynn of CBS did when she passed on his boast that the Moral Majority helped register 14 million fundamentalists. Richard Viguerie, hardly one to downplay evangelical voting power, reports in his new book, *The New Right: We're Ready to Lead*, that the figure was more like 2.5 million. Some students of the election consider even that to be charitable.

There are several explanations for the press's behavior. The simplest is that Falwell and his fellow evangelists offered inviting opportunities for stories. Reporters tired of the normal equivocations of public officials and presidential candidates have found in New Right evangelists people more than willing to talk in the kind of quotes that beg to be blown up into 24-point type. When conservative evangelist Pat Robertson told a *Washington Post* reporter, "We have enough votes to run the country," it was tempting to write a story around the quote. And that's exactly what Garrett Epps did in an otherwise balanced account in the *Post* in March 1981. In a recent phone interview with me, the Moral Majority's Cal Thomas said, "We're becoming a society

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with a chicken in every pot and a baby in every trash can." Pause. "Boy, that will look great in print, won't it?" Statements like these may not be the key to electoral success, but they are sure to promote attendance at news conferences.

The 1980 presidential campaign also gave Falwell a perfect forum for self-promotion. Carter certainly didn't want to advertise his views on such sensitive subjects as abortion. Reagan's general views on "social issues" were well known, but his advisors did their best to gag their candidate whenever reporters pressed him to elaborate about things like "creationism."

Falwell, on the other hand, was not only happy to talk about all these issues, he minced no words. In a sense he served as a proxy, saying out loud all the things many reporters suspected Reagan would say if he had a chance to speak his mind.

But there was something else at work in the hype surrounding the Moral Majority, something at the very heart of the process by which changes in society become "news." In this February's *Harper's,* Nicholas Lemann writes that it wasn't oil or economic growth or central air conditioning that created the "Sunbelt." Instead, it was journalists and academicians searching for a convenient label for a complicated development. Never mind that the "prosperous" Sunbelt is marked by some of the nation's worst poverty, or that the Southwest's dramatic diversities argue against categorizing it at all. The term "Sunbelt" has captured journalists' imaginations. For a few, it has made their reputations. Those lucky enough to have first stumbled upon this notion have become renowned as experts, sought after by colleagues and talk show hosts. Extra thousands of dollars can be earned on the lecture circuit or writing for various Sunday magazine sections that thrive on identifying new "trends."

Much the same has happened in the coverage of the Moral Majority. As with the growth of the Southwest, the emergence of politically active but conservative evangelicals is a newsworthy event, if for no other reason than the contrast with the generally liberal religious activism of the 1960s. Unfortunately, trying to categorize the resurgence of religion in America has led to a kind of oversimplification that can be very destructive of rational political and social analysis. Reagan and conservative senatorial candidates won for a wide variety of reasons, some of which have to do with a longing on the part of many voters for a return to older values—values that Democrats must acknowledge if they are to reclaim power. But don't confuse that appeal with the Moral Majority per se. The name means nothing more nor less than the 400,000 members it represents. Too many reporters found it easy to employ the term broadly, and the result was that much of the public came to believe "Falwell" and "return to morality" were inseparable ideas.

Perhaps the best explanation for why the press so easily crossed this border into misrepresentation is that, unlike "the Sunbelt," the Moral Majority is a phenomenon that directly affects journalists. When Falwell decries the evils of secular humanism, he isn't talking about just Jane Fonda and Ralph Nader. He's attacking reporters.

One of the few things Spiro Agnew ever got right was that leading members of the media *really are* Eastern Establishment liberals. Political scientists Robert Lichtler and Stanley Rothman recently conducted a survey of over 200 influential journalists. They found that two thirds of the members of the media elite come from northern industrial states. Most come from upper middle-class families and describe themselves as liberal—something not even Walter Mondale is doing these days.

What's more, these journalists are a particularly secular bunch. Half have no religious affiliation whatsoever and 86 percent never or seldom go to religious services. They generally support sexual freedom, abortion, women's rights, and affirmative action. In other words, they are among the very people Falwell blames for driving America into a moral tailspin.

The enmity is largely mutual. Most reporters find Falwell's anti-intellectualism distasteful if not downright dangerous. His appeal is based in large part on simple answers to complex questions: biblical morality, limited government, and basic anti-communism. People who make a living writing and thinking don't look charitably on such simplistic attitudes. Nor do they take kindly to someone who questions the basic principle of their profession: free expression. Falwell's efforts to boycott TV shows and "clean up" libraries have inspired some writers to hysteria. It's also interesting that after the initial round of "Moral Majority: A Political Holy War" stories, the only long special reports on network TV focused specifically on the Moral Majority's efforts to censor books and boycott objectionable TV shows. The press loves to cover the press—even this article testifies to that—and journalists tend to confuse what's good for them with what's good for the country.

Feeling defensive, journalists have responded the best way they know: by writing stories. Though ostensibly objective, most of them leave the careful reader or viewer with little doubt as to the

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> By the last installment of a four-part *New York Times* series, Falwell joined Teddy Roosevelt and Thomas Jefferson by 'creating something very similar to a political party.'

reporters' sentiments. Sometimes the criticisms are explicit; usually they're more subtle. There's an obvious sneer behind such phrases as "Bible-thumping, polyester-clad fundamentalists." Words like "censorship," "extreme," and "invasion of privacy" show up frequently in such stories.

If Moral Majority leaders like Cal Thomas say publicly that press coverage has been "only slightly better than what we'd [expect to] read in *Pravda*," in private they can't help but be pleased. Most of Falwell's current and potential constituents already distrust the "liberal press"; its hostility only confirms what they believe to be the rightness of their cause. Falwell also has been the beneficiary of a phenomenon with which political journalists should be especially familiar: what's described as powerful often ends up being powerful. When a congressman with a liberal voting record and a not-so-liberal district reads repeatedly about Falwell's huge television audience, he may become more willing to support an anti-abortion bill. Or at least he'll be less likely to lobby his undecided or wavering colleagues to vote against such a bill.

Of course, the power to create a trend also carries with it the power to destroy it—just ask John Anderson. The lethal device lies not in criticizing the subject, but in ignoring and belittling it. In recent months Falwell has begun suffering this fate. The press seems tired of him and he's pretty much dropped from public view. Even Reagan, having been advised that an enthusiastic embrace of Falwell's agenda would further undermine his already shaky presidency, has steered clear. Richard Viguerie recently complained that Falwell still hasn't been invited to the White House for a private lunch with the president. He probably won't be soon. Indeed, during the last two years Reagan seems to have had a better sense of Falwell's real power than most journalists; his selections of Vice President George Bush and Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor over Falwell's vehement objections testify to that.

This current silence should prepare us for a resurgence of interest in the Moral Majority in the months ahead. The emphasis this time won't be on Falwell's rise, but on his fall. Journalists will report that his influence and power are waning; having played a large part in erecting this straw man, they will revel in knocking him down. But don't expect any apologies for their having mis-reported the story in the first place. In fact, the press likely will discover yet another phenomenon—for example, a resurgence of liberal Christians demanding such things as nuclear disarmament and an expansion of social programs.

Such coverage will return some perspective to the role of religion in our political life. Unfortunately it probably will continue to miss one of the most important points about the Moral Majority—the human side. Somehow the people involved in the movement have been largely ignored as reporters focused on Falwell's claims of strength and his dubious prescriptions for political change. There are members of the Moral Majority who aren't arrogant, smug, and vindictive; we just haven't seen many of them. Perhaps it's because they're relatively undramatic and unquotable. A less charitable explanation is that their sincerity makes them impossible for journalists to ridicule. Or more likely, they simply don't fit the pattern for how Moral Majority members are supposed to behave.

Of the numerous reporters who have written regularly on the Christian Right, Frances FitzGerald has been one of the few who has taken the time to listen to these people rather than merely generalize about them. In her long *New Yorker* article in May 1981, FitzGerald talked to members of Falwell's church about their lives, their religion, and their politics. While Falwell may well be guilty of cynically manipulating religion for his personal aggrandizement, FitzGerald found his parishioners far less calculating. For all their conservative views, the faithful in FitzGerald's account are sincere, even likable, people, genuinely concerned about what they see as the moral decay of American life.

For most journalists, this approach was rejected in favor of quoting Falwell and a few alarming statistics. This made the Moral Majority something to be feared, respected, or villified, depending on one's prejudices. It also made it into something that it wasn't. □

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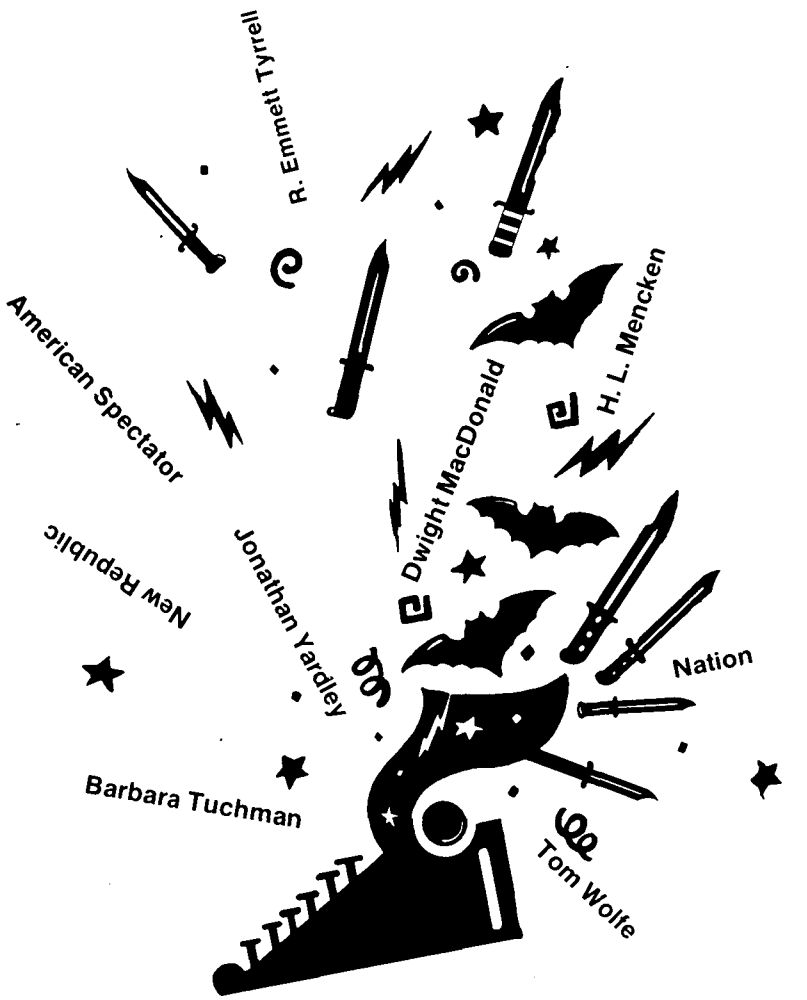
The Age of the Artful Put-down



by Alex Heard

A few months ago the television series "Brideshead Revisited" enjoyed a brief hold on America's popular imagination. Friends wouldn't return phone calls while it was on the air and the paperback reissue was an overnight bestseller. I missed Brideshead, so I can't judge whether all this was deserved or not. But Brideshead's merits as a program aren't what intrigued me. As the words of praise grew and the flattering reviews increased, I was struck by something else—that it was only a matter of time before this budding conventional wisdom would be assaulted. Somewhere, out there, whether toiling in a small attic loft or in the highest bastions of American criticism, I knew some reviewer was getting ready to trash the show.

I wasn't disappointed. Just as the series was nearly over, Jonathan Yardley, the Pulitzer Prize-winning book reviewer at *The Washington Post*, pronounced his verdict. Though it was of no consumer value by then because people were either committed to seeing the series through or not, Yardley plunged ahead. "The English," he wrote, "who on the whole are not stupid, know a sucker when they see one. Give us a smidgen of Eton and a dollop of Harrods, toss in a thigh of Princess Di, and we writhe in near uncontrollable ecstasy. In 'Brideshead,' we get not smidgens and dollops but oodles and gollops."

Now accused of being gullible Anglophiles, many Brideshead fans went scurrying for cover. The show was passe, and they were seeking new topics of conversation—like Jonathan Schell's new book on the horrors of nuclear war, a very hot topic right now. Not for long, I suspect; the

Alex Heard is a Washington writer.

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backlash to the first wave of praise has already started.

This cycle has become distressingly familiar. A book, movie, or political idea might be flawlessly brilliant or hopelessly flawed; either way it won't escape attack. Criticism isn't the issue here, but the kind of criticism. Is the writer trying to inform or simply scorn? Is the purpose to provide insight or merely to impress? Does the criticism logically make its point? Or is it nothing more than an Artful Put-down?

There's evidence of the Artful Put-down everywhere. From the left, *The New Republic* offers: "The pursuit of power is fundamentally a philistine occupation, and it is not likely that a genuine intellectual, mindful of history and human nature, would find the transient glory of public affairs worth the trouble."

And from a recent *Nation* comes this comment on the new national security advisor, William Clark: "It is a bit hard to see Clark in that role. His intellect failed to win him a degree in either college or law school."

From the right we have R. Emmett Tyrrell Jr., editor of *The American Spectator*, with this analysis of Congress: "It cannot be easy to be a United States congressman. I know it looks easy, all that smiling, schmoosing, and striking of historic poses; but the fact is that it must be very difficult for the solons of Capitol Hill to perform their public services on a hill. How much more comfortable and fitting it would be for them if their business were conducted in a cave. Consider last month's humbug with the budget. . . ." Just so you don't think I've cut him off as he's about to make his real point, the next line is, "Do you think it was easy for them to pass that extravagant appropriations bill, the one that put donkey ears and a clown costume on budget ceilings?"

Barbara Tuchman has elevated her Artful Put-downs to a world view. In an attack on mass culture in *The New York Times* in 1980, Tuchman divided the world into things and people who were "Q" (Quality) and "non-Q." She took to the battlements to defend the former against the coming schlock Armageddon: "In culture the tides of trash rise a little higher by the week: in fast foods and junky clothes and cute greeting cards; in films devoted nowadays either to sadism or teenagers [which] consequently are either nasty or boring; in the frantic razzle-dazzle of Bloomingdale's and its proliferating imitators; in endless paperbacks of sex and slaughter." And so on and so on, in one of those lengthy listings of all-that-is-wrong that are included in essays of this type as unfailingly as references to sun-tanned roller skaters in articles about California and polyester leisure suits in pieces on the Moral Majority.

Ah, the polyester leisure suit. Just as long hair during the 1960s became the symbol by which elders decided their youths were hedonistic communists, polyester has become the definitive badge of modern Babbitry. To reveal the "sterility" of rural life, Ed Koch described people clad in "Sears and Roebuck leisure suits." If the wearers were too poor to afford virgin wool, or perhaps too busy doing important things like running a business or raising a family to feel shame about synthetic fibers, that doesn't matter. If you sport polyester, that says it all.

What ties all these examples together is the shared understanding at the root of all snobbery: some people are better than others and I'm one of them. Rather than inform, the object is to ridicule, to entertain at the expense of others. The Artful Put-down substitutes style for thought. As George Orwell put it in "Politics and the English Language," such writing is used "not as an instrument for expressing thought but for concealing it or preventing it."

It certainly makes for good reading, though. Something as dull as "Tip O'Neill is wrong" can become "O'Neill, O'Neill, old Gaspar in *The Bells,* a miser only in his spending of Good Sense. The poor numa says the Republic is dying, but he hears only his own obscene gasps, for the raffish boob and his pol-pals are as dead as the babble The Party of the People blubber on about. . . ."

The style is easily recognizable, particularly in *The American Spectator*. Certain recurring phrases and techniques of beastification and mass-imagery abound. The words solon, numa, The Republic, boob, blubbering, Right Honorable, and babble are common. So is the punctuation trick of Demeaning Something by Giving It Capital Letters.

I'm not saying derision isn't sometimes appropriate. The insult can even be a work of art if the phrase is properly turned, puncturing what is pretentious with a beam of insight. Churchill, for example, said of Clement Atlee, "It is said that he is a modest man. Certainly he has every right to be."

But the question has to be, What is the derision being used for? If the Artful Put-down helps illustrate a larger point, it adds to the writing. As a substitute for analysis and evidence, it's empty and snide. Does the writer demonstrate why his subject merits such scorn? Or does he merely assume it?

It's obviously a fine line. One can be snobbish in appearing non-snobbish, just as rich young people

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elevate thrift-store hand-me-downs to high fashion. There's snobbery and reverse snobbery. To even talk about the subject inevitably invites criticism, as I'll no doubt discover.

But there's still an important point here, and perhaps it's best illustrated with an example from the writings of H. L. Mencken, who seems to be the role model for so many contemporary writers.

The Artful Put-down is easily recognizable. Certain recurring phrases are common, as is the punctuation trick of Demeaning Something by Giving It Capital Letters.

(Yardley even named his *Post* column after Mencken's book, *Prejudices*). At his best, Mencken could be searing, entertaining, and insightful. At his worst, he was glib and petty. In the latter category, consider an essay called "The Sahara of the Bozart." The essay, a blanket attack on southern culture, said in part, "Down there a poet is now almost as rare as an oboe player, a dry point etcher, or a metaphysician. It is, indeed, amazing to contemplate so vast a vacuity. . . . Nearly the whole of Europe could be lost in that stupendous region of fat farms, shoddy cities and paralyzed cerebrums. . . . And yet, for all its size and all its wealth and all the 'progress' it babbles of, it is almost as sterile, artistically, intellectually, culturally, as the Sahara Desert."

Wonderful prose—and an idiotic point, given the dominance of the South in twentieth century literature. I know that sounds like a Put-down itself, but it's backed up by evidence. Like so many of his contemporaries, Mencken spoke from a traditional ignorance among Eastern intellectuals about the rural South.

I could also get snide about the whole thing, matching Mencken sneer for sneer. Try this: "Could there be any explanation for old Helium Lips' [read: Gas Bag] misjudgment other than that he woke face down in a puddle of last night's warm brew and having dried his face, began writing? For as the works by Messrs. Faulkner, Penn Warren, Thomas Wolfe, Tate, Ransom, and, later, a few Ladies of some note—O'Connor, McCullers, Welty, et al.—clearly show, the man was All Wet."

If I were a reviewer who wanted to be noticed, which course do you think I'd pick?

Potato Head Put-down

As Mencken illustrates, the Artful Put-down has long been with us. Before Tuchman there was Dwight MacDonald, lamenting the state of mass culture in the 1950s. Before MacDonald, there was Henry Adams.

And of course snobbery is as old as society itself. Among the upper classes there have always been devices members have used to assert their superiority over everyone else. Down through the centuries these have included aristocratic titles, academic degrees, and conspicuous patronage of the arts.

There's also traditionally been a strong countervailing force in American life: a widespread faith in democratic values. This faith probably reached its peak in the 1930s. The decade's intellectuals—somewhat naively, to be sure—celebrated the innate wisdom of the common man. Carl Sandburg proclaimed, "The People, Yes." The sight of George Gudger's workboots could launch James Agee on a flight of ecstatic prose.

The movies of Frank Capra perhaps best convey this spirit. Capra's characters were imbued with the values of small-town America. They were hard-working, thrifty, honest, and, above all, democratic. They detested snobbery and anything that smacked of pretension. In *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town*, an ambitious female reporter, jaded by life in the big city, barely conceals her initial contempt for Gary Cooper's small-town naivete. Her stories about him ridicule his simplistic ideas and behavior. By the movie's end, of course, she has fallen in love with him.

In their anti-snobbism, the thirties may have been the decade of no standards, but we've come a long way since. The most telling movie of the present era may be Woody Allen's "Manhattan." Early in the movie Diane Keaton tries to demonstrate her sophistication by deriding a litany of famous composers and writers. At the end of the movie Allen recites his own list, but of things he likes, including Willie Mays, Cezanne's still lifes, and Louis Armstrong's recording of "Potato Head Blues." Though this latter list is far more charming, it's really no different from Keaton's. She tries to impress by what she puts down, he by what he celebrates. In both cases it's a flashing of taste badges to prove they're interesting people.

Taste badges have grown increasingly important in recent years as yesterday's trappings of

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snobbery—money or a college degree—have become far more common. A lot of people have money, thanks to the revolution that began with the New Deal. And a lot of people have college degrees, thanks to another revolution that began with the G.I. Bill.

This social mobility has been accompanied by a radical increase in physical mobility as small-town America has become more urbanized. Corporations move people around constantly. With this mobility and with the decline of the old class distinctions has come social insecurity. One must constantly deal with strangers who have little idea of one's history or talents. In small towns, neighbors would know everything there was to know about you; one postured and posed at the very real risk of getting caught. Not so in modern, mobile America, where the need to impress new groups of strangers almost every day has made the flashing of taste badges a central part of most conversations. One wears the right clothes. One likes the right kind of food. One takes trendy and reverse trendy positions on the best books and movies—and also on the worst.

Taste badges in themselves often aren't enough. Good taste gains one acceptance but not distinction. For that, an additional twist is required. The discovery of the perfect French restaurant or an obscure artist will get attention. So will a provocative Put-down. If everyone is hailing Mr. X as the great new writer, call him a "pretentious posturer" and eyebrows will rise. Do it cleverly and you may begin a trend. Certainly that attractive blonde across the table will start giving you the attention you deserve.

In modern, mobile America the need to impress new groups of strangers almost every day has made the flashing of taste badges a central part of most conversations.

Much of this snideness is imitative. For example, during the two decades after World War II a whole generation of intellectuals made *The New Yorker* the final arbiter of good taste. If the ads urged them to wear Hathaway shirts and drink Schweppe's tonic water, they did. Some of the imitators now admit that in those days it really was best not to venture an opinion about a book until *The New Yorker* pronounced its judgment.

A lot of this is said to have changed in 1965, the year Tom Wolfe made *The New Yorker* itself the object of an Artful Put-down in a memorable essay. Then *The New York Review* came along to unite literary and political snobbery in a Put-down of everyone associated with the Vietnam war. With Vietnam came another development that encouraged Put-downs: single-issue politics. When one side considered itself totally right, while its counterpart was malevolently wrong, there was no room for communication, only invective. In the last decade and a half, this kind of polarization seems increasingly to have characterized our politics.

Television has also played its part. The 20-second sound bite is far better suited to the Artful Put-down than to thoughtful analysis. A politician who calls Reagan's New Federalism a "travesty and a sham" is much likelier to be on the 11 o'clock news than one who thoughtfully attempts to assess the proposal.

Snob Artists Anonymous

Perhaps the most efficient snobbery breeding laboratory of them all is the undergraduate liberal arts program, where many of the attitudes that lie behind the Artful Put-down are transmitted from one generation to the next.

Dozens of examples of the Artful Put-down from my own college days at Vanderbilt come to mind, from imitations of John Simon's pretentious "On Language" column to catty comments in restaurant reviews about townie waitresses who pop their gum. But one example of the way this particular torch gets passed stands out for me. We students used to worry a lot about whether or not there was Life After College, and one afternoon I attended a "wine and cheese colloquium" on the subject, hosted by an English professor. He was widely idolized, and was one of my favorite teachers, but he had that sense of ironic disdain for everything "off campus" that marked so many of my teachers and so quickly became second nature with the students who looked up to them.

At that session the teacher offered a description of engineering students as people who "build heaters." And the students—mostly English and philosophy majors—came to the disturbing conclusion that no, there wasn't life after college, at least not in any non-slobbering form.

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Most envisioned a world, dominated by technocrats and engineers, in which no one would understand their literary allusions and bon mots. One student, who was particularly worried about his future job prospects, spoke for everyone: "It's not that I would mind working in the back room of a K-Mart," he said, "it's just that I wouldn't have anybody to discuss *Pulay*-toh with." Typical of so many Vanderbilt students, he had come from the sticks armed with no such pretensions, but had learned them well in a short time. We all had, and we nodded in grim understanding. It occurred to none of us then that perhaps, just perhaps, we might meet someone "in the back room of a K-Mart" who had something interesting to say on a subject we knew nothing about.

For purposes that I now think I understand better, we had set up a simplistic view of this world that is quite common on campus and goes like this: There are two types of people, those who understand "art" (including English, art history, philosophy, and language majors) and those who don't (including chemistry, biology, computer science majors, engineering students, and nurses). Whatever "they" know is not really worth knowing, we thought. The reasoning, in an example I actually heard mentioned, had to do with one of our heroes, Walker Percy, the famous novelist who had once been a scientist. After all, hadn't Percy said that he had never understood a single human being through the methods of science but had through art?

He did say something like it, but the speaker should have considered that Percy (who went to medical school) only "rejected" science after he had studied it. Our method was easier and quicker; we rejected science without having any conception of it.

The snobbish boundary we English majors tried to draw (with "creative" on our side and "technician" on the other) was based on ignorance and fear. Knowing that there was a vast store of knowledge ("science") that we could never lay claim to, we tried to discount its importance in a simple-minded way. Because "scientists" were doing something we could not, we thought our attitude toward them must necessarily be belligerent. Instead we should have wished them well and concentrated on excellence—not exclusivity—in our own fields, communicating whenever possible with them and others possessing interests and ideas different from our own.

But of course it's so much easier to deride, as in this description of sorority girls: "Sorority girls are all well-scrubbed and primly clothed—tightly wrapped in plaids and thick sweaters; underneath the sweaters are white cotton turtlenecks, and over the collars spill tiny gold crosses. None have facial hair, or, I imagine, body hair, except in the required places; and they probably all lack natural vaginal bacteria." Pornographic, cruel, dumb, and written by me. Yes, what you may have suspected all along can now be revealed. Much like a reformed alcoholic, with obvious parallels to St. Francis of Assisi, who had to be extraordinarily bad before he could try to be good, I was one of the great sarcasm hacks in college literary magazine history.

If there was a widespread perception that I hated everything (which wasn't true) it was because I found it much easier to write negatively and sarcastically, rather than substantively and positively, about anything. Among my greatest conceits: that disc jockeys were produced through artificial insemination in "burned out radio tubes"; that a person whose opinions I disagreed with should be "hit in the face with a pie"; and that a girl I was (at one time) friends with should be condemned to Purgatory because her family had "two, count 'em, two identical station wagons." I must note, by the way, that I had no desire to be taken seriously, that I remained fundamentally a comedian, but I was wrong to ever venture into the realm of opinion-giving with this kind of style.

It began to end for me in a few beers-in-the-face, an attempt by one irate "fan" to choke me to death (yes, this is true), and for me, confusion. My *weltanschaung*, I uneasily started to realize the summer before my senior year, was not suited for any world outside the pages of the student magazine. So I began trying to reform, an effort that culminated on graduation day, when I officially became A Man. My mother, a southerner with a deep respect for such transitional events, took me aside and said, "Aaaa-lex. You a man now. Cut thuh crap."

It hasn't been easy. The clawing, badge-flashing, and one-upmanship is, if anything, more frenzied in the real world than in college. The standard first question at so many parties is "What Do You Do"—usually asked, unfortunately, not so much out of interest but in the hope that you will have a job with less status than the person asking the question. I don't think my Vanderbilt friend would last for long at these affairs, even if he didn't work in the back room of a K-Mart. Nor do I think he'd find anyone likely to discuss Plato with him. So busy are people flashing their taste badges and exchanging Artful Put-downs that what passes for serious conversation is as sterile as the mythical South Mencken wrote about. □

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Misfire: How Pentagon Critics Shot Down Their Own Ace

by Jonathan Alter

Last month this magazine set out to explain in some detail how the defense budget could be cut without hurting national security. There were two reasons we devoted so much space to the defense issue: first, the enormous importance of the subject for the future of the American economy and military; and second, our sense that many people who favor a smaller defense budget don't know the specifics of how to accomplish it. This lack of knowledge on the part of would-be critics has long meant that the Pentagon gets virtually everything it wants. And in the few cases it hasn't gotten what it wanted, the cuts have tended to be crude.

The best explanation for why so many otherwise publicly minded people know so little about the Pentagon involves a kind of ideological spear that the military has gleefully watched its liberal and libertarian critics impale themselves on for years. Many of these critics don't like the whole idea of weapons, which means they don't learn details about the weapons, which in turn means that when the time comes to debate whether the weapons are working and should be procured, they find themselves steamrolled. The critics get the satisfaction

Jonathan Alter is an editor of The Washington Monthly.

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that comes from railing against war and other nasty things; the country gets billions of dollars' worth of defective planes, ships, tanks, and missiles.

Such unwillingness to get involved in the nitty-gritty details of defense issues was especially pronounced just after the Vietnam war, when any discussion of the relative merits of weapons was seen as another sellout to the military establishment. "Why build effective weapons? To kill more people? *No* weapons are good; in fact they're so hateful they shouldn't even be talked about. So just get rid of them." That's how people thought.

This crippling attitude has faded some in the last couple of years as liberals like Gary Hart have realized that we might need something out there to defend us, and that arguing on the Pentagon's terms—probability of kill, radar capability, and so forth—is the only way to make any cuts at all.

But those who believe the old peace attitude is entirely dead should consider the case of a group called the National Taxpayers Legal Fund. In March, Dina Rasor, the director of the Fund's Project on Military Procurement, was fired for being *too effective* in challenging wasteful military programs. Her activities in the year since she founded the Pentagon watchdog group had offended Edward H. Crane III, former publisher of the left-libertarian magazine, *Inquiry*, and a board member of the Fund. "The Project on Military Procurement is attempting to increase the efficiency of our fighting machine," Crane wrote in a memo that preceded the firing. "From my perspective it is already grossly too efficient. I'm also skeptical of arguments that we can actually save the taxpayer money by telling the Pentagon how it can save money."

The upshot of the objection to Rasor and her efforts to get the military to build better weapons is contained in the comment of the Fund's board chairman, none other than Eugene McCarthy. According to Crane's memo, McCarthy believes that it's "more important to cut the Pentagon's lean than its fat." While blunter than most, this anti-defense view is not at all unique among old liberals and their new-found libertarian soulmates. The firing of Rasor shows once again that the best kind of Pentagon criticism—the kind, like hers, that ties the Pentagon up in knots with specific, informed attacks on waste and incompetence—often falls victim to silly ideological demands.

No Thanks to Tanks

Rasor, who turned 26 a couple of days after she was fired, is a good example of what the Washington fast track can produce when it's working well. She was only two and a half years out of Berkeley when she started the Project, with nothing behind her but a stint tearing off wire copy for ABC News and some experience analyzing defense issues for the National Taxpayers Union. In February of last year, A. Ernest Fitzgerald, a former director of the National Taxpayers Union and now director of the Legal Fund (the two groups are officially unrelated), arranged for Rasor to start the Project. Fitzgerald, whose decision in 1968 to go public on the $1 billion cost overrun on the Lockheed C5-A airplane made him the most renowned of government whistle-blowers, was trying to find a way to encourage others working inside the Pentagon to reveal the truth about the weapons they worked on. Knowing that few other disgruntled bureaucrats would be willing to follow his lead and ruin their careers for the sake of one patriotic revelation, he hoped that Rasor could act as an outlet for the leakers who weren't quite willing to go public.

For conventional weapons, the freeze mentality runs the risk of thrusting people back into that old mind trap, where war is bad, peace is good, and the details are to be worked out later.

In the one year since she began the Project, Rasor has succeeded brilliantly. Every budding movement needs a publicist (in the best sense of the word)—someone who can bring reporters and sources together, keep interested parties informed, and establish useful networks (in the best sense of that word, too). To the extent that "military reform" has become a movement, Rasor performs that role. When a small inventor named Loeb Julie complained that for seven years the army had turned down his designs for a calibrator even though evidence showed it superior to that of his large competitors, Rasor helped him win wide publicity and Senate hearings, which proved him right. When reports surfaced within the army that the hydraulic fluid used in the new M-1 tank was dangerously flammable, Rasor brought it to the attention of the press, which has relied on her for much of its information on the flaws in the M-1 and other weapons.

"She has become a trusted conduit for Pentagon

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leakers," says Bruce Ingersoll of the Washington bureau of *The Chicago Sun Times*, noting that many leakers don't like to talk to the press directly. Defense reporters for *The Washington Post*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Christian Science Monitor*, *Chicago Tribune*, and other newspapers and magazines (including this one), have also drawn on Rasor's work. She is considered not only well informed and intelligent, but a clear talker, which is an especially valued commodity in the arcane world of military hardware.

Reporters covering the Pentagon do not welcome the airy discussions of strategic doctrine Crane wanted Rasor to give them. They cover *defense*, not foreign policy, and their stories involve whether weapons work, not whether they are "needed" in a larger sense. What the reporters require most are facts, figures, reports, and experts, and that's what they get from the Project. (One thing they don't get is classified material, which Rasor refuses to handle.)

Not surprisingly, Rasor isn't exactly a revered figure at the Pentagon. "I frankly find it difficult to deal with the fact that a young woman with no credentials could get as much credibility in the media and on the Hill," says Lt. Colonel Bill Hylander in the weary voice of a man who spends much of his time rebutting newspaper stories that the M-1 tank doesn't work very well, many of which originated with documentation provided by Rasor. Recently Rasor wrote a long article for *Reason* magazine citing chapter and verse of how the military has fudged the operational testing and evaluation of the M-1, the Sparrow missile, and other weapons. The article struck home on Capitol Hill, where Senator David Pryor inserted it in the *Congressional Record* and hearings may be called. It even drew the praise of military brass like Admiral Isham W. Linder, who wrote Rasor expressing support for her efforts.

"Dina is successful for basically three reasons," says one of her sources within the defense establishment who, like most of what Rasor calls her "closet patriots," prefers not to be identified. "First, she does her homework. She is probably better prepared on her subjects than the principal policy-makers. Second, she limits herself to studying a small number of systems—the Maverick missile, the M-1, the C-5, the cruise missile—which gives her a less scattershot approach. And third, she is not out to destroy defense. She's got no axe to grind."

Freezing the Whistle

"It's surprising we supported her for as long as we did," says Jule R. Herbert Jr., president of the National Taxpayers Legal Fund, who handled the actual firing of Rasor. Herbert, the author of a recent unsuccessful ballot initiative in the District of Columbia calling for private school tuition tax credits, is a doctrinaire libertarian. He praises much of Rasor's work—in fact, a recent fund-raising letter to Fund members recounts her efforts to publicize the unreliability of the cruise missile—but he was perturbed by her unwillingness to address the assumptions that lie behind the weapons. "My objection was that the project was too narrowly a forum for whistle-blowers, rather than substantive analysis of what's wrong with all of defense," Herbert says. "You can't avoid the big positions, or you will end up debating on the Right's terms."

This is not a new position. Libertarians, along with many liberals, have long argued that we need to completely reassess our defense commitments and the size of our armed forces. The last straw for Crane in his decision to push for Rasor's firing was a conference of military reform experts sponsored by the Project at which cheaper alternatives to new weapons were discussed. Why build new M-1 tanks when existing M-60s are only half as expensive? they asked. Why return to C-5 air transports when Boeing 747s are available for a fraction of the cost? These kinds of questions irked Crane and Herbert. They created the mistaken impression that Rasor and company were acting like "cheap hawks," a name applied to some military reformers, including several very conservative members of Congress, who are strongly pro-defense but anti-Pentagon. The libertarians, by contrast, have doubts about whether we need tanks and aircraft at all, beyond the minimal amount required for the defense of the continental United States itself.

Eugene McCarthy, chairman of the board of the National Taxpayers Legal Fund, believes it's 'more important to cut the Pentagon's lean than its fat.'

The Crane-Herbert position is not without logic. A strong case can be made that the funda-

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mental underpinnings of American defense policy should be reassessed (see "Forget the Persian Gulf" and "Get Out of Europe," *The Washington Monthly*, April). But pending the day that reassessment is completed, we need Dina Rasors to give us the facts on the weapons we might require. If Rasor were to shirk that task in deference to liberal views on foreign policy (however much she personally sympathizes with those views), the flaws of the M-1 would be less widely known, the idiotic wastefulness of airlift procurement would be less well understood, and the Pentagon would be a lot happier.

"The Pentagon has used the emotional aspects of foreign policy to muddy the waters on any discussion of weapons procurement for years in order to distract and separate taxpayers," Rasor wrote in her parting shot to the National Taxpayers Legal Fund board. As for the contention of Crane and many old liberals that an inefficient military will prevent the U.S. from intervening in foreign conflicts, Rasor simply points to Vietnam and its weapons and leadership failures, none of which prevented intervention or hastened withdrawal. Likewise, the knowledge on the part of weapons analysts that helicopters are very fragile and unreliable in combat did not prevent the U.S. from undertaking the disastrous Iranian rescue mission. Because we may fight again one day (whether we are "efficient" or not), it makes some sense to have the leanest, toughest defense possible. That way at least our own soldiers won't needlessly die, as many did in Vietnam because of faulty weapons.

Dina Rasor feels so strongly that the country must fix its military that she will continue the Project on Military Procurement out of her own savings until another source of funding can be found. She had to let her assistant go, but husband Tom Lawson has agreed to answer the phone, photocopy reports, and handle other secretarial responsibilities for the time being. The Fund is willing to give her a few thousand more dollars (money she originally helped raise), but only on the condition that her biggest backer, Ernie Fitzgerald, leave the Fund board. Fitzgerald, who in recent years has stood up to the Pentagon, Richard Nixon, and the Supreme Court, is not likely to comply. Meanwhile, Rasor, bolstered by many calls from reporters, Capitol Hill staffers, and "closet patriots," has vowed to press on even if she has to run the Project out of her living room.

It's no big surprise, of course, that in the competition for funding among liberal groups, something like the Project on Military Procurement is bound to lose out to organizations supporting a nuclear freeze. Preventing the destruction of the world will always grip the public imagination more firmly than an analysis of what is wrong with a tank's hydraulic system. But without denigrating the genuine accomplishments of the freeze movement, it is important to recognize that sometimes thinking about big abstract issues can distract us from thinking about smaller (though multibillion-dollar) problems for which real solutions are more within reach. For all of its consciousness-raising promise, the freeze movement runs the risk of thrusting people into that old mind trap, where war is bad, peace is good, and the details are to be worked out later. This thinking, while containing a certain logic when applied to nuclear weapons, is disastrous for any effort to do something constructive about the rest of the military, as the history of unscrutinized Pentagon budgets makes clear.

"We didn't want to become a *Consumer Reports* on weapons efficiency," Jule Herbert put it in explaining why Dina Rasor was fired. Yet until enough people decide to play that role, the liberals, the libertarians, and everyone else will continue to waste billions of dollars on a military that benefits no one. □

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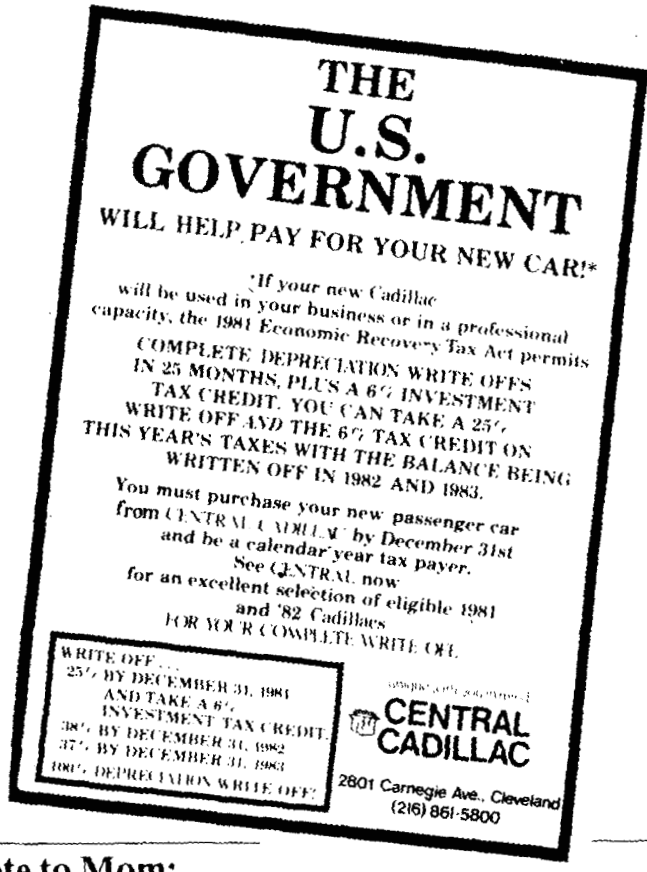
Tidbits & Outrages

Reaganomics Meets Rodeo Drive: Part VII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Loose Ships Sink Lips

The following exchange took place on March 4 between Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger and one of his questioners at a Senate hearing, Senator Carl Levin:

Levin: I notice the contrast between your statement today relative to the navy, where you say, "We have permitted out naval capability to deterioriate." Contrast that with Admiral Hayward's assessment just a few weeks ago, that "we have a far better navy than we did three years ago."

Weinberger: I agree. I think we probably do have a better navy today than we had a couple of years ago. . . .

Levin: You are acknowledging that we have a better navy than we had a few years ago. You said we permitted our naval capability to deteriorate.

Weinberger: We have permitted our naval capability to deteriorate. At the same time we are better than we were a few years ago.

Note to Mom: Don't Forget the Labels on the Softwear

Young People ages 10 to 18 can now spend their summers attending Atari Computer Camps, which offer "practical state-of-the-art theory and hands-on experience."

Better Yet— Make February 2 Hound Dog Day

The Memphis local of the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees union is demanding a paid holiday to honor the birth of Elvis Presley.

For More Information: Contact *The Progressive*

Botulism poisoning, which occasionally results from improperly canned foods, is caused by one of the deadliest toxins known. Seven ounces, if distributed efficiently, could kill the entire world population.

For $59.50 a Maryland company will sell a strain of clostridum botulinum, the bacteria from which the toxin easily can be produced. The only requirement is that the order be placed on stationery or a requistion form from a bona fide research facility. A company spokesman says little effort is made to verify the authenticity of each form to ensure the culture doesn't fall into the wrong hands. "However, we do usually call up to verify they received the shipment in the mail," he says.

For customer convenience, the company offers a toll-free number.

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The True Dawn of Civil Rights

Within the next few months, Congress is expected to approve an extension to the landmark 1965 Voting Rights Act, considered by many to be the most significant civil rights law in American history. Much bitter controversy attends the extension debate as liberals and conservatives contest what is necessary to guarantee all Americans their constitutional right of suffrage.

This year also marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of the 1957 Civil Rights Act. Were it not for this little-remembered law—the first of its kind passed by Congress in over three quarters of a century—the 1965 Voting Rights Act and numerous other civil rights laws never would have been possible.

The history of the 1957 law provides many useful lessons about the legislative process that today's congressmen would be wise to reflect on as they consider the extension bill. This is also the story of the man who brilliantly and doggedly engineered the Act's passage: then-Senator Lyndon B. Johnson. Much has, and will be, written about Johnson, of his blunders and his triumphs. The 1957 Civil Rights Act is one of Johnson's triumphs—and may some day be remembered as his most lasting.

by George Reedy

In retrospect, the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1957 still seems like a miracle. The last measure that referred even indirectly to rights for former slaves had passed the Congress in 1875. It was a Reconstruction act that, like all other Reconstruction acts, was soon forgotten in the rush to withdraw the last vestiges of northern rule from the South. For 82 years it had been impossible to secure enactment of a bill that even asserted the virtue of civil rights—let alone did anything about them.

Blacks were not completely powerless during this period. The fact that many had moved north meant they were able to vote. As time went on, these northern blacks started down the road that traditionally had led to the amalgamation of other minorities into the American polity—ward politics. But in their case it did not work. Skin color prevented their getting lost in a sea of white faces. However, a judicious use of the ballot box did succeed in bringing the civil rights issue to the fore. In the 1920s, increasingly large blocs of northerners in the U.S. Congress based part of their power upon black votes, and this led to the creation of civil rights blocs in both the House and the Senate.

Generally speaking, these blocs were impotent—capable of doing little more than making noise. But it was an uncomfortable noise that grated upon the ears and, in time, few representatives outside the former Confederate states dared profess opposition openly to the civil rights cause. That didn't mean non-southerners were willing to do much on behalf of civil rights; most of them, in fact, were quite willing to acquiesce to killing legislation repugnant to the southern bloc.

On the surface white supremacy appeared invincible. Segregation—de jure in the South, de facto in the North—was universal for housing,

George Reedy served as Lyndon Johnson's press secretary and on his Senate staff. He is the author of Twilight of the Presidency *(1970) and* Lyndon Johnson: A Memoir *(to be published in the fall by Andrews and McMeel), from which this article is adapted.* *© 1982 George Reedy.* *$12.95.*

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restaurants, theaters, and jobs. In Congress it was rare for a civil rights bill even to emerge from a committee, let alone reach the floor for debate. In Dixie, most elections were still won on the basis of which candidate could "outnigger" (express stronger anti-black hostility) the other.

By the mid-fifties, the issue had produced exhaustion on both sides of Congress. Everything had been said that could possibly be said; the result was a hardening of positions and an increasing polarization of attitudes. Movement in any direction was impossible because the question was not being treated as a legislative matter. Instead it was a clash between the deep-seated moral beliefs of two cultures—beliefs neither side felt could be compromised.

The southern advocates looked at the world through paranoid glasses. What they saw was a northern conspiracy to fasten upon them all the ills of society. In their eyes, the northern attitude was sheer hypocrisy, made possible only because "You don't have enough niggers up there to know what you're getting into. If you had as many as we've got, you'd know better than to keep stirring them up all the time. They were perfectly happy until you came along." Here I am quoting, not a white legislator, but a white newspaperman whose natural gentleness and cultivated manners would vanish immediately upon any mention of civil rights. If his was the voice of the educated South, one can only imagine the reaction of other southerners.

Frustration had also done peculiar things to the psychology of many northern civil rights advocates. The feeling of impotence was preying on their minds. They had a sense that the southerners had somehow deprived them of their manhood. There was a distinct note of retribution in their voices, and it was apparent that they wanted something more than a civil rights bill that would help blacks. They wanted a bill that would include every civil rights concept that had been concocted over half a century and they wanted to rub southern noses in it.

As happens so often in the political world, the polarized atmosphere actually created a kind of symbiosis. Many of the southerners were making their political livelihood by "defending" their constituents from "Yankee carpetbaggers." Many northern representatives were coming back to Congress year after year by denouncing "Dixie fascists."

Lyndon Johnson was less cynical. Texas was not Georgia, and while the issue was difficult, it was not quite as unmanageable as in other ex-Confederate states. More important, however, was Johnson's belief that there were areas of vulnerability in the southern armor. It was fascinating for me—a Yankee who might be able to comprehend but not share southern feelings on the race issue—to hear him talk. Most southerners, he said, were not very concerned about depriving blacks of decent jobs. They had hypnotized themselves into believing that blacks were inherently unwilling to accept heavy responsibilities and were much more at ease doing menial tasks that did not require them to make decisions.

Johnson went after the southerners where he knew their consciences were hurting: deprivation of black voting rights.

As for brutality against blacks, most southerners believed that only "white trash" participated in such actions anyway and that "law and order" would prevent future outbreaks. These attitudes were not going to change in the near future, in Johnson's estimate, and it was futile to anticipate any "give" on these points. There was one area, however, in which he contended that southern consciences were hurting: voting rights. Here, he claimed, even the most outspoken of white supremacists had a sense of doing something wrong. They truly respected the Constitution, which was unequivocal on the question of suffrage.

Southern Discomfort

Johnson's grand strategy, which began evolving in January 1957, had two main elements. First, it was designed to exploit the growing disenchantment southern Democrats were feeling about their coaltion with Republicans. (With Eisenhower now in power, Senate Republicans no longer needed to court southern Democrats as they once did to stop liberal legislation.) Second, Johnson meant to hit the southerners at their weakest point—deprivation of black voting rights—with the strongest weapon in the civil rights arsenal: enforcement of constitutional guarantees for the franchise. After all, Dixie legislators *were* constitutionalists, even though they were quite willing to concoct some peculiar interpretations of that document. The amended Constitution—however much they despised the

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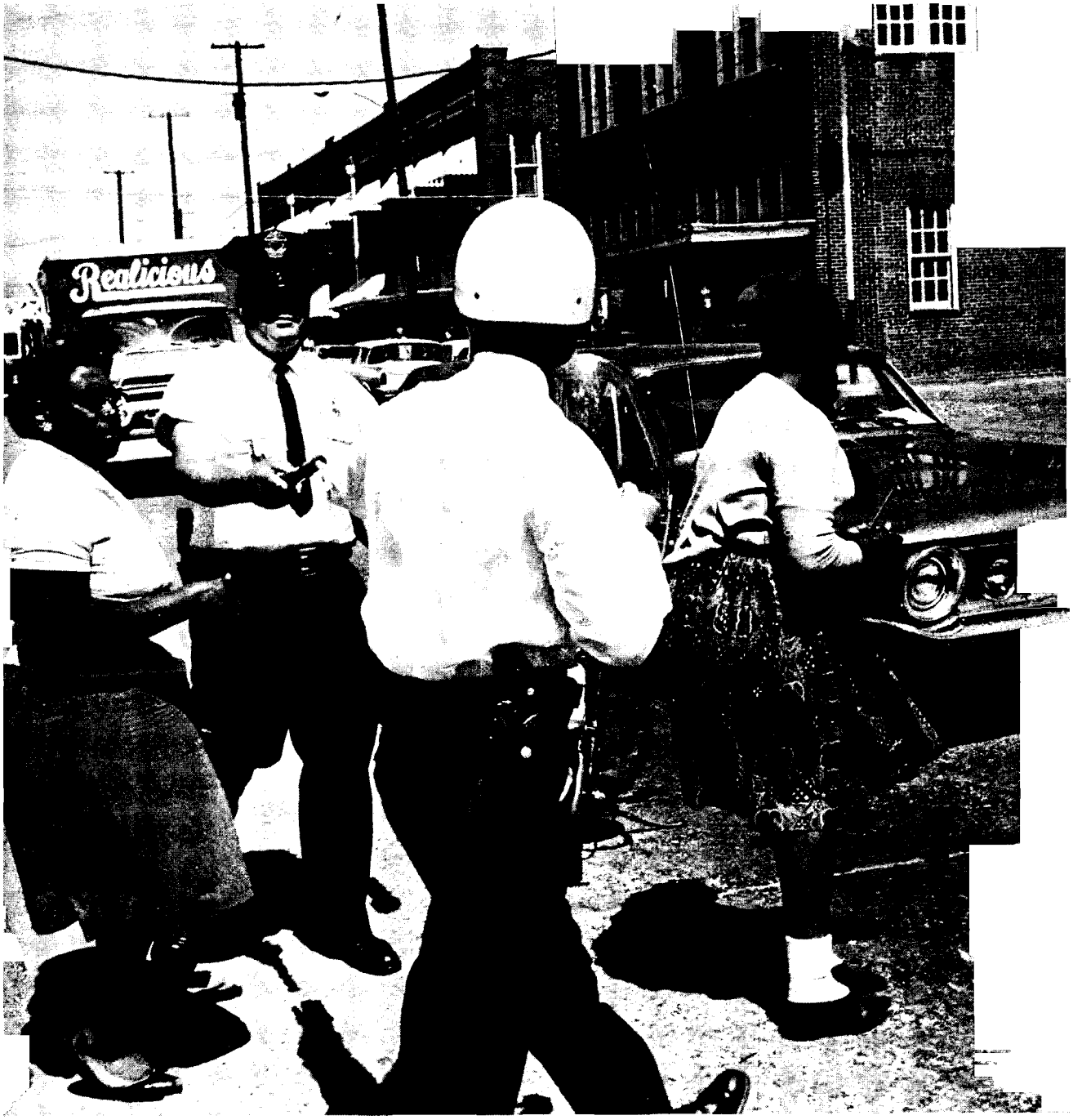

amendments—*did* guarantee blacks the right to vote. The basic charter did not say anything about the right to a job or the right to social equality or even the right to decent treatment by society. On voting, however, it was unequivocal.

But merely passing a voting rights act was not the sum and substance of the strategy. It had to be enacted in a manner that would pave the way for future legislative action in the field. That could be done only by making it apparent that the southern viewpoint was receiving just consideration. In short, during the legislative skirmishing it was essential that southern senators win some battles where they had reason on their side. Johnson's objective was to pass a civil rights bill without ramming it down the opposition's throat.

At no time did Johnson expect any southerner, other than himself, to vote for the measure. In the Deep South that was literally impossible. The object was to bring the legislation to a point where the southerners would decide that they had been treated in good faith and would therefore go down fighting against overwhelming odds. There was sufficient southern strength in the Senate to kill

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WASHINGTON POST

The 1957 Civil Rights Act gave a start to black voter registration (far right, in Greenwood, Mississippi, in 1963) and paved the way for the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which Johnson also helped steer to passage, this time as president (right).

the measure by filibuster. Legislative victory for civil rights was possible only if the opponents were persuaded that the cost of successful obstruction would be too high.

Johnson's whole strategy hinged upon the kind of civil rights recommendation Eisenhower decided to submit to Congress. In order to have room to maneuver the bill to passage, Johnson needed a measure that combined both reasonable and unreasonable (to the South) sections. To our surprise, that is what Eisenhower offered.

The next problem was to convince northern Democratic liberals that the debate should center on the Eisenhower bill rather than on one of their own. The northerners wanted their own bill because they were looking for "credit" with their constituents. What was involved here was a subtle bit of Johnsonian strategy. He wanted to fight the battle on a *Republican* measure so northern and southern Democrats would not be pitted against each other in a head-on clash. It sugar-coated the agony for southern Democrats to be able to tell their constituents that the dreaded Civil Rights Act had come to them under GOP sponsorship. Eventually Johnson persuaded his northern allies that failure to adopt his tactic would divide the Senate majority so decisively that there would be no action at all.

The Eisenhower proposal was so perfectly tailored to the Johnson strategy that I suspected collusion the first time I read it. Of course, the suspicion was ridiculous. A Republican president backed by a Republican justice department does not collaborate with a Senate Democratic leader to produce legislation that will redound ultimately to the Democratic Party's credit.

Nevertheless, Eisenhower's bill could not have fitted Johnson's purpose better if he had written it himself. No new rights were created by the president's proposal, but enforcement of existing rights was given to the federal district courts with specific injunctive powers. At the same time, another section of the bill empowered the federal government to send troops into any state to require that its citizens practice a broad range of generally unspecified "civil rights." To the southerners, this provision—known in the debate as Title III—was a revival of Reconstruction. For Johnson, anxious for something he could later bargain away to assuage southern Democrats, Title III was perfect.

To add frosting to the cake, the broad powers of Title III were not apparent from the language. Its potency could be revealed only by going back nearly a hundred years for a careful study of Reconstruction statutes. For some reason, the cross-indexing on this section was faulty, giving the southern Democrats additional ammunition. They could (and they did) hint broadly to their constituents that a *Republican* administration had tried to "put one over" but that southern senatorial vigilance had uncovered the scheme and brought it to public attention. The true meaning of the section had first been disclosed in a Senate floor speech by the revered Senator Richard Russell of Georgia, which added respectability to the southern claims.

The Russell speech touched off a heated flurry. As usual, both sides took absolute stands. Southerners were virtually threatening to revive the Confederacy. Northerners were insisting that the whole bill was meaningless without Title III.

When it became apparent the section was doomed, Johnson assembled a coalition of western state senators, Republican moderates, and those few northern liberals who were willing to risk misunderstanding with their civil rights following in order to obtain action. On a motion by Senator Clinton P. Anderson of New Mexico, the

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provision was stricken from the bill. The southerners could claim an important victory, having "repulsed" an attempt to reestablish Reconstruction. As Johnson understood, this later helped them survive the recriminations of their constituents when the final bill passed.

Deletion of Title III was not the only price that had to be paid for the bill. The southerners had another "do or die" objection. A provision in the measure permitted trial without jury in cases where voting rights had been denied. Here was a real stickler. The pro-civil rights bloc would have preferred the enactment of Title III—and, in fact, did get it for all practical purposes a few years later—but they did not regard its deletion as fatal. They were not, however, going to permit the law to be nullified by what would have been routine acquittals of white offenders by southern white juries.

When the full scope of the dilemma first became apparent to me, I thought the world was finally going to get an answer to the old conundrum of what happens when an irresistible force meets an immovable object. There was no apparent "give" on either side. The southerners were not going to permit the passage of the bill *without* a guarantee of jury trials—and they had the votes to prevent passage. Northern civil rights advocates were not going to permit the pasage of a bill *with* a guarantee of jury trials—and they also had the votes to prevent passage. It appeared as though many months of planning and careful work were going down the drain.

At this point Johnson rose to what I will always regard as his greatest height. It may well have justified his entire career and I know it kept me working for him when time after time I wanted to quit. He was absolutely determined that there would be a bill. He regarded the measure as a true starting point for reconciliation of North and South and he refused to remove it from the floor—despite advice to do so from many of his colleagues. He pleaded and threatened and stormed and cajoled. He prowled the corridors of the Senate, grabbing senators and staff members indiscriminately, probing them for some sign of compromise. He spent hours on the phone in nonstop conversations with the most ingenious legal minds he knew—Tommy Corcoran, James Rowe, Ben Cohen, Clark Clifford, Abe Fortas, Dean Acheson—pleading with them for a way to break the logjam. Virtually single-handed, he kept a large body of very strong-minded and willful men concentrating on a purpose that most of them thought could not be achieved.

Johnson kept insisting that a compromise must exist somewhere. He recognized the justice of the civil rights bloc position; he also accorded respect to the southern position that no man should be found guilty unless tried by his peers. Most observers thought these poles were too far apart to find a middle ground. But using the same set of facts, Johnson insisted that the reality was the other way around. If two opposing sides had a degree of validity in their contentions, he was convinced a legitimate way of meeting them both existed.

Johnson pleaded and threatened and stormed and cajoled. He was absolutely determined that there would be a bill.

Every effort, however, turned out to be a false start. The northern liberals did not fully understand Johnson's overall strategy to use the passage of one bill to pave the way for the later passage of stronger legislation. They suspected him of seeking to patch up the racial sores in the body politic with a meaningless cosmetic—and this impression could not be refuted publicly without backing the southerners into a corner where they would have to fight all the way. To exacerbate this situation, the press—which is so often compelled to deal heavily in cliches—described his strategy as "watering down" the legislation to a point of acceptability. The description was correct but the language was pejorative and did not convey the reality. In unemotional terms, Johnson was seeking a compromise that could pass the Senate. This was the normal course of the legislative process. The problem was that few could discuss civil rights in unemotional terms.

Jury Prudence

The idea for the compromise that finally came was born outside of the Senate. A University of Minnesota Law School professor wrote an article in the *New Leader* magazine explaining that there was a distinction between contempt proceedings for the purpose of punishment and contempt proceedings to enforce court orders. According to the author, there was ample precedent for action under the second heading *without a jury*. A brilliant lawyer on the Senate staff, the late Solis Horowitz, interpreted the point for the rest of us and the key to the whole situation was in our laps.

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What it boiled down to was jury trials without juries. This is an oversimplification, but it conveys the gist of the legal nuance Johnson needed to save the bill.

The drafting of a suitable amendment required the application of a superior and subtle legal mind. The task was undertaken by Dean Acheson and he and his staff produced a masterpiece. It was as politically artful as it was legally unassailable. It raised no red flags with statements that there would not be jury trials. Instead, it said there would be jury trials for *criminal* contempt proceedings—leaving civil contempt to be enforced in the normal manner *without juries*. In most cases, the civil contempt proceeding—which side-stepped the issue of individual guilt—would be sufficient to ensure the law was obeyed.

The political implications were profound. Such language gave the southerners an out. They could go home and say to their constituents: "We beat them Yankee carpetbaggers. They can't brand you a criminal now without a trial before a jury of your fellow citizens." The emotional implications of the phrase "can't brand you a criminal" were so strong that most southerners were willing to acquiesce in the broad powers federal courts now had to enforce compliance with existing civil rights law.

There was another implication, too, and Johnson was quick to make use of it. The southerners were now under some obligation to the rest of the Senate for its having met them half way. They would have a debt to repay and southern politician—even at their worst—are punctilious about paying their political debts.

On the other hand, the wording of the amendment put northern civil rights leaders on the spot. It was perfectly clear from the beginning that the bill included ample enforcement power, whatever its other shortcomings. A few tried to argue that the amendment "gutted" the bill, but they encountered a brilliant refutation from John Pastore, a senator from Rhode Island who *did* have a civil rights constituency. His arguments—made in a cross-floor exchange that actually changed some votes—left-liberal opponents with nothing upon which to base their opposition except a desire to punish the South. They could continue fighting only by claiming that retribution was more important than securing a measure of justice for the nation's black population.

One of the more interesting sidelights of this debate was Johnson's complete mastery of this abstract doctrine once he realized its relevance to passage of the bill. This helped him pull together his coalition and persuade his northern allies that the jury trial amendment not only left the enforcement of the measure intact, but was the only conceivable means of passing it.

In the noble tradition of compromise, the civil rights battle ended not with a bang but a whimper. The civil rights coalition—an informal group of labor, religious, liberal, and minority leaders—issued a statement expressing regret over the weakness of the bill but conceding there was enough in it to justify passage. Southern Democrats made the necessary speeches for their constituents, but when one of them attempted a filibuster he found himself staring into stony and unsympathetic eyes. One man was not enough to kill the bill, and eventually the Confederates went down before overwhelming force.

This may lead some to believe that the whole performance was scripted. That was not the case. It was, instead, the production of a master legislative mind at the height of his powers. Johnson had correctly assessed all of the forces at work and had correctly forecast his colleagues' reactions. He had also selected the right time to move—and every indication since then is that he was correct. Earlier action would have been impossible.

This was the point the civil rights leaders failed to understand. They were right in claiming that the 1957 Civil Rights Act contained only limited substance—though it must also be said that they grossly exaggerated its shortcomings. But they failed to recognize the irrelevancy of the point. The act was a watershed that they were too engrossed in legalisms to recognize. What had happened was that a major branch of the American government that had been closed for nearly a century to minority members of the population seeking redress was suddenly opened. The civil rights battle could now be fought legislatively in an arena that previously had provided nothing but a sounding board for speeches. Johnson's predictions turned out to be valid. In less than a decade, a body of civil rights legislation had been placed on the statute books that went far beyond anything dreamed of in 1957.

Obviously all of this legislation has not solved our racial problems; not every problem can be solved by federal action. Despite our best intentions the effects of three centuries of injustice and deprivation are not going to vanish in a few years. But I do not believe this should detract from Johnson's achievement. What he did was demonstrate that with a little understanding, some patience, and a great deal of persistence, the democratic system can accomplish far more than many believe possible. □

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WHO'S WHO in the Administration

Making trouble for one's boss never has been exactly a route to success in the government, but what's less known is that making trouble even for the *predecessor* of one's boss is almost as perilous. How else to explain Richard Nixon's vendetta against Daniel Ellsberg, whose revelation of the Pentagon Papers reflected badly only on the administrations of Kennedy and Johnson, a development that should have delighted Nixon? The answer is that most bureaucratic minds cannot stand the idea of a whistleblower, no matter how noble, honest, and injurious to one's enemies he might be. Those who lack guts tend to look unfavorably on those who don't.

This truth was reinforced recently by the firing of a man named **Jerry Jennings**, who for nine years served as director of internal security for the National Security Council. Jennings is the person identified by the justice department as having pursued an internal investigation of his boss, **Richard Allen**, and the mysterious $1,000 he found in Allen's safe. This led to Allen's departure, and eventually to the hiring of Jennings' new boss, **William P. Clark**, who showed his gratitude by quickly sending Jennings packing. . . .

The surprising news about the Office of Management and Budget is that while Stockman's public profile has been lower, he continues to run the OMB without interference from the White House, which was talking about firing him just six months ago. Meanwhile, **Joe Wright**, who replaced **Edwin Harper** as Stockman's deputy when Harper went over to the White House to head the office of policy development, has yet to make a dent. One source says, "No one can figure out why he was hired." **Don Moran** continues to be the main power on substantive issues, **Dave Gerson** on administrative.

In

WHITE HOUSE

Special Assistant to the President—**William F. Sittman** has been a career foreign service officer.

Special Assistant to the President and Director of the Office of Cabinet Affairs—**Becky Norton Dunlop** has been deputy director of the presidential office of personnel.

AGRICULTURE

Administrator, Food and Nutrition Service—**Samuel J. Cornelius** was the deputy director of the Community Services Administration.

Chief, Soil Conservation Service—**Peter C. Meyer** is a Missouri farmer.

DEFENSE

Air Force Chief of Staff—**General Charles A. Gabriel** has been commander in chief of U.S. Air Force in Europe.

Chief of Naval Operations—**Admiral James D. Watkins** has been commander in Chief of the U.S. Pacific fleet.

AGENCIES AND COMMISSIONS

ACTION
Director, VISTA—**Constance Horner** has been deputy assistant director for policy development.

Federal Trade Commission
Executive Director—**Bruce Yandle** has been an adjunct scholar at the American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research.

Interstate Commerce Commission
Commissioner—**Heather J. Gradison** has been a rate officer at Southern Railway System.

Out

WHITE HOUSE
Special Assistant to the President and Director of the Office of Cabinet Affairs—**T. Kenneth Cribb, Jr.** has become assistant counselor to Edwin Meese.

Member, National Security Council staff—**Jerry Jennings** has been fired.

Member, National Security Council staff—**Raymond Tanter** has moved to the White House communications office.

Member, National Security Council staff—**Douglas Feith** has been fired.

Agriculture
Administrator, Food and Nutrition Service—**G. William Hoagland** has become a special assistant to the Secretary for food and nutrition policy.

Chief, Soil Conservation Service—**Norman A. Berg** has resigned at the request of the Secretary.

ACTION
Director, VISTA—**James Burnley** has become a special assistant in the Justice Department.

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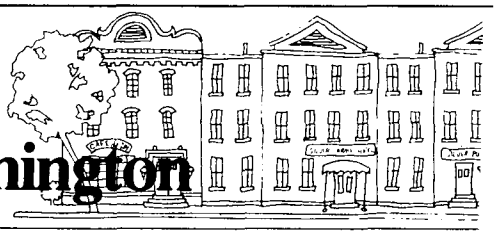

Where to Stay in Washington

The Madison, the Jefferson, and the Mayflower

These hotels are in the area bordered by Massachusetts Avenue, Connecticut Avenue, K Street, and 15th Street, which is also where The Washington Post, the National Geographic, many of the law firms and trade associations, and some fine restaurants and shops are located. The White House is a five-minute cab ride or 10-minute walk away, and the subway can take you to Capitol Hill, the Smithsonian, the Pentagon, and just about anywhere else you might need to go.

The Jefferson, 1200 16th Street, N.W. (202) 347-4704. This intimate (76 rooms), elegant hotel offers you a chance to get away from it all with a little pampering on the side: a butler to shine shoes and bring snacks whenever you wish, hand laundry and ironing service, a free *Washington Post* at the door, and a tin of English biscuits at your bedside. But you should also know that Reaganites are flocking to the Jefferson. So depending on your politicial affiliation, you may want to join them. . . or decide to steer clear. The rooms are decorated differently, some with antiques, chandeliers, canopied beds, and French-door windows. Many are still being renovated, however, and their plumbing is showing its age. Rates are not the lowest: singles, $110-$135; doubles, $115-$145; one-bedroom suites, $200-$300; two-bedroom suites, $300-$350. Parking is $6 per night; for children's rates check with the management. The $200 weekend package provides two guests with a room for Friday and Saturday night, wine and cheese on arrival, a breakfast, a brunch, and two hours' use of a limousine. **The Hunt Club** is a charming, expensive restaurant with lots of comfortable chairs and intimate nooks for two. There is one small room for meetings.

The Madison, 15th and M Streets, N.W. (202) 862-1600. The Madison ranks as one of Washington's premier hotels in terms of luxury and service. And given its proximity to *The Washington Post*'s offices, it also ranks as the hip spot for that crowd to meet and eat. Owner Marshall Coyne has adorned the lobby as well as the guest rooms with antiques and imported furniture. All rooms come with a small refrigerator, a prestocked mini-bar (you're billed for what you consume) and a box of chocolates. The baths have heated towel racks, shower massages, scales, and phones. For foreign guests there's a 24-hour monetary exchange office. And the concierge is available for any other need, from a toothbrush to Kennedy Center tickets. Singles, $110-$150; doubles, $130-$170; suites, $280-$925. A third person in a room (including children) is $20; parking is $5 a night. The weekend package offers a champagne brunch, three hours of limousine service, and a double room for $135 per person for two nights. The elegant **Montpelier** serves excellent, expensive, French fare at lunch and dinner. **The Retreat** is less expensive and has to be the only place in town where you can get Mexican food in an English pub atmosphere. **The Coffee Shop** and **La Terrace** serve breakfast and lunch at even more reasonable prices; and there are sandwiches at the **Madison Bar**.

The smaller and more intimate (44 rooms) **Dolley Madison**, a half block away, is run by the same management and has all the services of the main hotel. **The Mirabelle**, serves breakfast and lunch, and there's a small meeting room. Singles, $135; doubles, $155; suites, $200-$225.

The Mayflower, 1127 Connecticut Avenue, N.W. (202) 347-3000. With a subway stop next door, one of the longest lines of cabs in the city waiting out front, and a nice variety of restaurants and shops in the immediate vicinity, this is one of Washington's best situated hotels. A $35 million renovation is in the works, and if the recently completed meeting space on the second floor is any indication of what's to come, **The Mayflower** may soon have some of the most attractive rooms in the city. Renovation is scheduled for completion in July, but that may be a bit optimistic. And because only 300 of the hotel's 700 rooms are being redone, even after the work is finished you may have to settle for standard, although tasteful, hotel-traditional. Singles, $88-$128; doubles, $108-$148; suites $185-$450. Children under 18 in same room with parents are free; additional adults, $20 each. Parking is $5 a night. There are two sightseeing packages: one for $115 per person for three days and a free breakfast, dinner, cocktail, and Tourmobile pass for the monuments and the Mall; for $170 you get one more day and a tour of Mt. Vernon.

The hotel is prepared for meetings of all sizes; 18 rooms on the second floor and the lobby can accommodate from ten to 1,000 people. Also in the lobby you'll find a bar, shoe-shine stand, newsstand-gift shop, florist, foreign currency exchange, jewelry shop, and United Airlines ticket office. **The Carvery**, a favorite of J. Edgar Hoover, serves three moderately priced meals, and **Town and Country** serves breakfast and lunch, with a piano bar in the evening during the week.

—Donna Fenn

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Joseph Nocera ON POLITICAL BOOKS

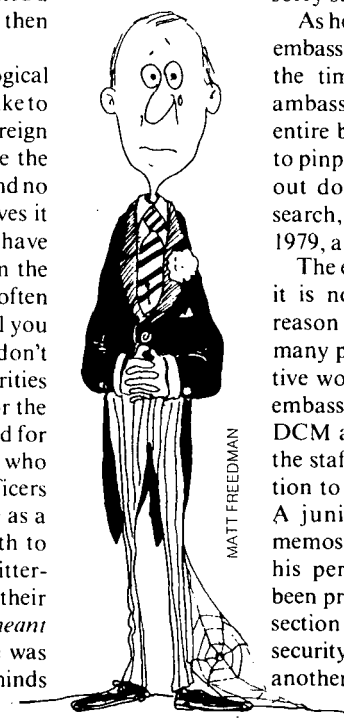
Just about everyone in the foreign service has some theory about why working for the State Department just ain't what it used to be. In the old days, when men were men and State was State (and virtually all foreign service officers were men), it was a service to be proud of, State veterans will tell you. It was elite. It had cachet. It was full of intellectuals. There was lots of esprit de corps. "The striped-pants boys," Senator Joe McCarthy might call them, with sneering contempt—but that was okay. Within the fraternity, it was no insult to be insulted by McCarthy; a merit badge was more like it. Indeed, if you were inclined towards pointy-headedness and wanted a career in what used to be called "public service," then State was where you wanted to land.

My, how times have changed. This mythological foreign service, if it ever did exist as the old hands like to recall, certainly exists no longer. People in the foreign service still claim from time to time that they are the government's elite troops, but it's a hollow boast, and no one who works in an embassy today really believes it now. Morale is terrible. And while there once may have been esprit, one now cannot spend much time in the company of FSOs without being struck by how often they whine about their lot. The old-timers will tell you that the trouble is the snotty junior officers who don't understand their place; or the women and minorities who are entering, and thus "diluting," the corps; or the "low pay," which encourages the best talent to head for the private sector; or all those political appointees who don't understand true diplomacy. Younger officers have their own litany, starting with what they see as a mass of deadwood above them, blocking the path to swift promotion. Veteran foreign service spouses bitterly resent the loss of prestige that once came with their husband's rank. ("I remember when it really *meant* something to be a consul general's wife," I once was told); younger spouses are bored out of their minds because they can't find work abroad.

You don't have to investigate to uncover these complaints. In the two years I spent in Paris (where, yes, my wife was an FSO), I heard them again and again, from people at all levels of the career ladder. FSOs, to tell the truth, can be quite obsessive on the subject.

Marguerite Michaels has heard these complaints too; but while my instinct after a while was to tune out, she was smart enough to write it all down. The result is her book, *Showing the Flag: A Report from Inside a U.S. Embassy*,* and it is much better than it has any right to be. Badly written (Michaels has a severe case of that dread disease, Woodstein's Syndrome) and lacking any sense of perspective or judgment, *Showing The Flag* could serve as a case study for everything that's wrong with "non-conclusionary," fly-on-the-wall reporting. For instance, if the political officer tells her the deputy chief of mission is a hack—as he does, often—she quotes him. And when the DCM tells her with equal fervor that the political officer is incompetent, she writes that down too. After a few hundred pages of this, one really wants to know who's right.

That said, *Showing The Flag* may well be the best thing ever written about what life is like in an embassy. If you read between the lines, you'll find dozens of clues as to why the foreign service is in its sorry state.


MATT FREEDMAN

As her subject, Michaels chose our embassy in Bogota, Colombia, during the time Diego Ascencio was the ambassador. There isn't a date in the entire book, which makes it difficult to pinpoint the period involved without doing independent library research, but it appears to be parts of 1979, and most of 1980.

The embassy as Michaels portrays it is not a very happy place. One reason is that there are simply too many people with too little substantive work to do. "We don't need an embassy this large *anywhere*," the DCM admits at one point. Much of the staff accordingly turns its attention to other, often petty, concerns. A junior officer writes scathing memos to the ambassador because his personal belongings have not been processed by the administrative section (after a five-month wait). The security officer decides to railroad another young officer out of the foreign service—and succeeds.

Another reason for the high level of unhappiness is that, oddly enough, most people in the foreign service don't like living abroad. For one thing, as Michaels makes clear, all the real power is in Washington. People in embassies serve largely as "press services" for Washington, one of Michaels' sources tells her. It is equally true, as I learned in France and she saw in Bogota, that Americans are not very good at adapting to other countries and cultures. FSOs tend to stick to themselves, staying relatively isolated from the country in which they are living. When they do come into contact with "the natives," they often have trouble coping with aspects of the culture different from our own. Over time, this can develop into a real hatred for the country. I

Joseph Nocera is an associate editor of The Texas Monthly *and a contributing editor of* The Washington Monthly.

**Showing the Flag: A Report from Inside a U.S. Embassy*. Marguerite Michaels. Simon & Schuster, $13.95.

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knew embassy people in France (and I confess I was as bad as any of them) who complained constantly about the French. In Bogota, it apparently was even worse. By the end of the book, embassy people are saying Colombia is "an ugly country full of ugly people." Out of such attitudes good diplomacy is not made.

While Michaels was doing her research, a true crisis occurred in Bogota: Ascencio and about 15 other ambassadors were taken hostage by Colombian terrorists. The embassy in Bogota was unequipped to cope. It had little or no information about the terrorists; indeed, it had been telling Washington for months that terrorists were no longer a problem in Colombia. The foreign service had to ask the CIA to find out something—anything—about the people who had taken Ascencio hostage. The secretaries didn't speak Spanish, so information needed from the government and other embassies became infinitely more difficult to obtain. Pettiness, of course, rose to the fore rather quickly: the head of the Peace Corps, who was clearly the brightest fellow in the embassy, was put in charge of one of the "crisis teams," but he was afraid to be too vocal because he knew that he was bitterly resented by his team members, who thought *they* should have been made team captain. And the security officer was worried mostly about the shape his career would be in if he "lost" the ambassador. (He had already "lost" one ambassador—Adolph Dubs—during a tour in Afghanistan. Ironically, the day before Dubs was assassinated, this officer had written a report saying that there weren't any terrorist problems in Afghanistan.)

It's not all so bleak; the foreign service is filled with bright, hard-working people, some of them lucky enough to have important tasks to perform. But for the most part, Michaels draws a grim picture of how an embassy functions—from the ambassador's devotion to a drug-eradication program that probably won't stop the flow of drugs but will help his career, to the boring lives of the embassy wives.

The main focus of Taylor Branch's and Eugene Propper's riveting book, *Labyrinth*,* isn't embassy life; it's the investigation into the 1976 assassination of former Chilean ambassador to the United States, Orlando Letelier. But in its opening pages the authors give a fascinating glimpse into another key aspect of U.S. embassies: the role of the Central Intelligence Agency.

It's no secret that there are CIA agents operating out of most American embassies. What's surprising is that top embassy officials, including the ambassador, often don't know what they're doing. So it is in *Labyrinth*. The U.S. ambassador to Paraguay, George Landau, was a career diplomat who found himself in a difficult position. The Paraguayans, after one of their prisoners

**Labyrinth*. Taylor Branch, Eugene M. Propper. Viking, $17.95.

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admitted working for the CIA, demanded an explanation. Leaning toward secrecy, the CIA station chief at the embassy denied the agency's involvement. The Paraguayans thereupon produced incontrovertible evidence of the agent's identity, to Landau's acute embarrassment.

Life can get very complicated in this murky world of guess and anticipation, as Landau soon found out. The Paraguayans, capitalizing on Landau's vulnerability, asked him to approve two false visas as a favor to Paraguayan President General Alfredo Stroessner. The CIA knew all about this simple matter, they told him.

Landau was in a quandary. He assumed the two visas were payoff to the Paraguayans for the CIA agent debacle, but time did not permit him to confirm this. He didn't want to contact his superiors in the State Department, afraid that they would deny the request. This might have prompted the Paraguayans to publicize the whole ugly affair, which in turn would have reflected badly on him and undermined his position. Secretary of State Kissinger, after all, wanted things to run smoothly.

Landau decided to issue the visas, hoping that the CIA would cover for him. He guessed wrong. The CIA had no knowledge of the request, or so it said. Seduced by his own worries about high-level clandestine affairs, Landau had put his entire career in jeopardy.

All this left Landau with only one choice: he must lie. Fortunately, events were so convoluted that he was able to concoct a credible alibi for approving the fraudulent visas. His superiors at the State Department did not challenge him, and the precaution Landau took of photographing the visas later proved decisive in identifying Orlando Letelier's assassins.

Landau's predicament represents the kind of nightmare State department personnel can find themselves involved in. An even more serious example occurred in 1970 when the CIA, without telling U.S. Ambassador Edward Korry, tried to stop Marxist Salvador Allende from becoming president of Chile. What results is an institutional schizophrenia, as embassy personnel must cope with an autonomous—and anonymous—power center within their very own walls.

From this it would be easy to conclude that the CIA, by compromising State Department operations in both real and imagined ways, has also contributed mightily to the downfall of the embassy ideal. But I don't think so; my own theory of why life in the foreign service ain't what it used to be is much simpler.

It seems to me that the whole business of diplomacy and embassies abroad has become largely symbolic. This is not just an American but a worldwide phenomenon. As even George Ball points out in his memoirs, "Jet planes and telephones and the bad habits of presidents, national security assistants, and secretaries of state now largely restrict ambassadors to ritual and public relations." *Real* negotiations are handled by governments, not ambassadors. When Iran took the hostages, to show our displeasure we threw their diplomatic mission out of the United States. Which meant what? Well, it meant nothing. Their diplomatic mission had no role in the crisis except the symbolic one of acting as a lightning rod for our displeasure. So it is with embassies all over the world. Yes, they do have one legitimate function—that of gathering good, unbiased intelligence about the country. But the truth is that governments don't always want good intelligence if it goes against their preconceived notions of how things *ought* to be. Telling Washington what it *wants* to hear is good for your career; telling the truth can be one of the surest ways to perish in the bowels of Foggy Bottom.

It's tough to go through life knowing your only role is as a symbol, "a presence" as they like to say in diplomacy. It's hard to admit, so by and large people don't admit it. They deny it by harking back to the good old days, wishing fondly for their return, which will never happen, of course. They try to figure out ways to bring back the sense of elitism (one suggestion I heard from political officers was that consular and administrative officers be given a different—lower—classification, since they weren't part of the "real" foreign service). They focus on getting ahead. On "the turkeys" in Washington who "just don't understand." On the decrease in the housing allowance. On anything, in other words, except the most obvious fact of all. Which is if you closed most U.S. embassies tomorrow, the only real sufferers would be AT&T and TWA. □

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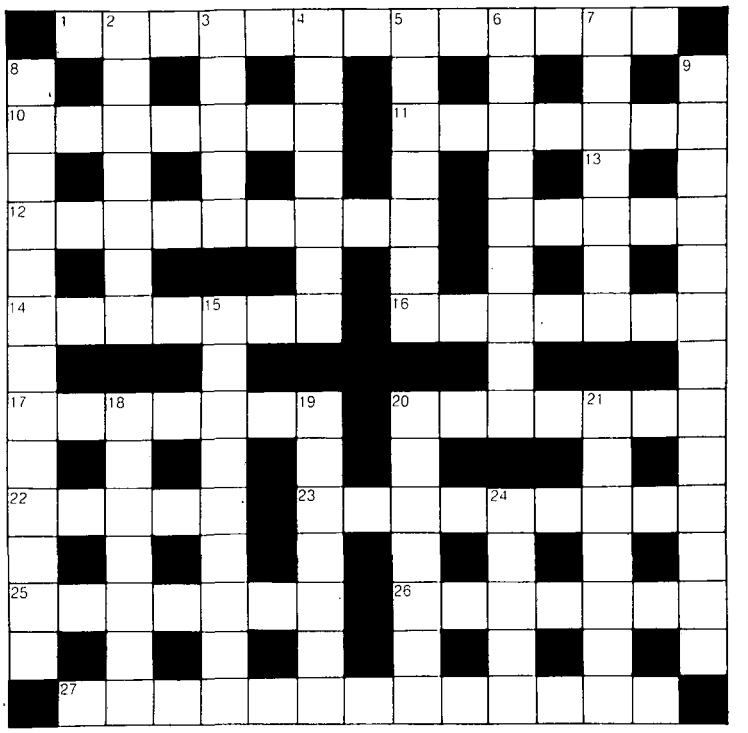
The Political Puzzle

by John Barclay

The numbers indicate the number of letters and words, e.g., (2,3) means a two-letter word followed by a three-letter word. Groups of letters, e.g., USA, are treated as one word.



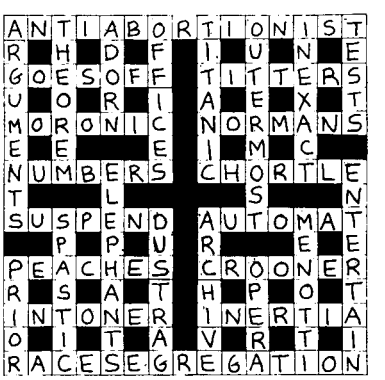
ACROSS

1. Shortcoming of Reaganomics? (6,7)
10. Areas of former circus homes? (7)
11. Adds to the pot crushed peanuts. (5,2)
12. Shortcut around deep North exit. (9)
13. Rain clogged at the bottom. (5)
14. Putting Ike initially in without French promotes unhappiness. (7)
17. Less acute actor in bed. (7)
20. Where Rumania has oil around its pole. (7)
22. For kitchen aid put 99 in backsliding Communist. (5)
23. Lion visit upset bow man. (9)
25. Handsome in a gentle way. (7)
26. Elected in to stop Ted totally. (5,2)
27. Attention spans for Reaganomics? (8,5)

DOWN

2. Somehow end up at and live. (7)
3. Organ of deity around North America. (5)
4. Get probers off the streets. (7)
5. Former Thespian becomes tax man? (7)
6. Plans D.O.T. tennis get-together. (7,2)
7. Man of influence is in the juice, we hear. (7)
8. Sacred cow of Reaganomics? (7,6)
9. Fiscal authority arranged a poor trip pain. (13)
15. Apter exit from which to remove completely. (9)
18. Dirty story about an uncle. (7)
19. Fan threw choice in Scottish river. (7)
20. Official Vermont spoor disposition. (7)
21. Rod to end lisp awkwardly. (7)
24. Within train organization. (5)

Answers to last month's puzzle:



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Political Booknotes

Abuse of Trust: A Report on Ralph Nader's Network. *Dan M. Burt. Regnery Gateway, $12.95.*

America in Search of Itself. *Theodore H. White. Harper & Row, $15.95.* Occasionally the prose gets pretentious, but otherwise this book is a triumph. White has always been willing to go to the grass roots—he was a pioneer in the coverage of New Hampshire primaries. And he has always been able to get politicians to speak candidly. He once asked Nixon how he could bear campaigning, shaking hands all day, smiling. Nixon finished the thought: "And all the while you're smiling you want to kick them in the shins." Because no one else has seen and heard what White has, this political history of the past 26 years seems certain to remain unsurpassed. One of the more interesting passages is the story of the 1956 Democratic campaign, which shows the beginning of the dominance of the primary and the end of the dramatic convention in the selection of presidents.

—Charles Peters

The Best Defense. *Alan Dershowitz. Random House, $15.95.*

Clipped Wings: The American SST Conflict. *Mel Horwich. MIT Press, $25.* Before America's first commercial jet, the Boeing 707, entered service in the late fifties, some in the aviation industry were already advocating the construction of a needle-nosed Mach 2 aircraft called the Supersonic Transport. Building an SST was a matter of national pride, they insisted; the United States should not relinquish it's leading role in the aviation industry to the Western Europeans, or worse yet, to the Russians, both of whom were considering building such a craft. To its advocates, the SST represented progress—the logical next step in an industry that had always equated improvement with greater speed. To many other aviation experts, however, the SST loomed as another Spruce Goose (Howard Hughes' ill-fated flying boat)—an aircraft that would never turn a profit for manufacturers or airlines.

Horwich's painstaking reconstruction of the SST's fitful and expensive ten-year struggle to take flight and its eventual death in 1970 is an excellent case study of intense bureaucratic warfare and of the power a well-organized environmental lobby can bring to bear on government. Unfortunately Horwich's prose often sounds like the minutes of an endless meeting at FAA headquarters.

—Jeff Miller

Doing Life: The Extraordinary Saga of America's Greatest Jailhouse Lawyer. *Stephen Bello. St. Martin's, $13.95.*

The Fate of the Earth. *Jonathan Schell. Alfred Knopf, $13.95.* See "Tilting at Windmills," page 4.

Henry Kissinger: Years of Upheaval. *Henry Kissinger. Little, Brown, $24.95.* This is an important book, better written and more thoughtful than *The White House Years.* However, the author's ability to restrain his self-critical tendencies remains unparalleled. This is most evident in his account of the events involving Chile, Cambodia, and OPEC.

—C.P.

The House and Foreign Policy: The Irony of Congressional Policy. *Charles W. Whalen Jr. Univ. of North Carolina Press, $18.95/ $9.95.*

The Imperial Rockefeller: A Biography of Nelson A. Rockefeller. *Joseph E. Persico. Simon & Schuster, $16.50.* The author, Nelson Rockefeller's long-time speechwriter, has a sure feel for what made the man tick, from international affairs to art collecting to women (Megan Marshack, who watched him die, is described as a "20th Century Rubens wearing aviator glasses").

Rockefeller's gregarious public image masked an almost total absence of humor. He rarely read books, and relied on staff to do virtually everything for him, even brief him on the deteriorating medical condition of his own brother. Persico, a fine writer, usually stops short of drawing the conclusions his evidence suggests, but the elements of the man are here and worth piecing together.

—Jonathan Alter

Jews Without Mercy: A Lament. *Earl Shorris. Anchor, $13.95.*

The New Class War. *Frances Fox Piven, Richard Cloward. Pantheon, $11.50/$4.95.*

New York: The Politics of Regional Development. *Michael N. Danielson, James W. Doig. Univ. of Calfornia Press.*

The Past Has Another Pattern: Memoirs. *George W. Ball. Norton, $19.95.*

Self Reliant Cities: Energy and The Transformation of Urban America. *David Morris. Sierra Club, $19.95/ $8.95.*

Sentimental Imperialists: The American Experience in East Asia. *James C. Thomson Jr., Peter W. Stanley, John Curtis Perry. Harper & Row, $17.50.* Power corrupts, of course, but the finality of that statement tends to obscure the fact that the newly corrupted can display an often endearing naivete. This is especially true of the United States' century and a half of contact with East Asia, where ethnocentric arrogance and blind sentimentality have been the instinctive response of an inarticulate adolescent to a far more civilized and mysterious elder.

Although the authors bring their history up to the present, they have little interest in pointing fingers at possible villains of our Asian enterprises of the last few decades, and are concerned instead with showing how, for example, the Vietnam war was largely the result of trends perceivable throughout U.S. history. Their refusal to grind any axes makes the book a both practical and graceful introduction to a field that has lacked a piece of lucid generalization.

—Lee Butler

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Square Dancing in the Ice Age—Underground Writings by Abbie Hoffman. *Putnam's, $14.95.* Hoffman claims that the FBI, contrary to its public position, wanted very badly to catch him. That didn't stop him from holding live TV show call-ins, touring the FBI building, attending the Carter inaugural ball, and hamming it up for photographers at Disney World. He dined, gratis, at 50 of France's finest restaurants, posing as a critic for *Playboy*, his certification being a one-paragraph note he typed up in a Texas motel room.

"Fugitives catch themselves," he writes. Usually they turn to crime and get caught, but Hoffman's undoing came when he returned to grass-roots organizing. Starting with a town of 87 people, he led protests that eventually stopped an Army Corps of Engineers boondoggle. After listening to Hoffman's speech at one rally, Senator Pat Moynihan said: "Everyone in New York state owes Barry Freed [Hoffman's alias] a debt of gratitude for his organizing ability." The book is overwritten, but fun.

—Michael Hiestand

The Underclass. *Ken Auletta. Random House, $17.50.* This is a frustrating book. Auletta has done a prodigious amount of research. He has interviewed more than 300 people and read as many books and articles on the culture of poverty in American life. He has closely followed the participants of a "life skills" class in New York City designed to help welfare recipients get off government dependence and visited West Virginia and Mississippi to observe rural poverty among both blacks and whites. All of this produces information that is truly valuable and often provacative.

But having done that, Auletta ultimately lets the reader down. Rather than synthesize this wealth of material to offer fresh insights into a subject that badly needs them, Auletta pours his notes onto the printed page. What we get are literally thousands of numbing statistics interspersed with lengthy, almost verbatim transcripts of the

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"life skills" sessions. All of this detail probably kept the fact-checkers busy for months; unfortunately, after a few chapters it will probably drive away all but the most intrepid readers.

Parts of this book originally appeared in *The New Yorker*, in whose pages the cataloging of information sometimes seems more important than making insightful conclusions. Auletta's previous book, *The Streets Were Paved with Gold*, was a model of good journalism. Meticulously researched and written in a lively style, it wasn't afraid to offer thoughtful conclusions about the causes of New York City's fiscal crisis. But here the insights drown in a welter of statistics and repetitive detail.

Auletta's purpose, as he describes it in his introduction, was unerringly right: to examine government programs to aid the poor "free of ideological baggage." So much of the current debate about social programs seems to be of the simplistic, "more is better, less is better" variety, that marked the debate between conservatives and liberals over defense spending in the 1970s. Conservatives blithely assume cutting benefits will restore the work ethic; liberals seem to think any cut in a welfare program is utterly unconscionable. As Auletta's book demonstrates, in many cases welfare does undermine the work ethic, but in others government programs make a real difference.

Auletta would have left himself open to heated criticism from most of the experts he interviewed if he'd gone one step further and advanced his own conclusions on this subject. He also might have produced a great book. Instead, all sides get their say and the final lesson Auletta draws is that this is a complicated subject. That's very true—which is why the rest of us so badly need someone like Auletta to help us identify answers, not unanswerable questions.

—Phil Keisling

The Warning: Accident at Three Mile Island. *Mike Gray, Ira Rosen. Alfred Knopf.*

Watergate Games: Strategies, Choices, Outcomes. *Douglas Muzzio. New York Univ. Press, $17.95.*

Who Runs Washington? *Michael Kilian, Arnold Sawislak. St. Martin's. $14.95.*

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Why We Were in Vietnam. *Norman Podhoretz. Simon & Schuster, $14.50.* Toward the end of this splenetic book, the author writes that "a 'stab-in-the-back' syndrome never developed after Vietnam." Until now, that is. Though he was once anti-war himself (a fact he conveniently neglects to mention), Podhoretz spares no effort to skewer liberals whose activity in those years he believes borders on treason.

Considering the source, that analysis comes as no surprise. What's more interesting to ponder is how much Podhoretz on Vietnam resembles the left-wing revisionist historians attacked over the years in *Commentary*. Their view of historical events like Pearl Harbor or the origins of the Cold War is that *everything* you've read about them is false. The U.S. was always wrong. This book reverses that. You thought the war in Vietnam was fought inhumanely? No. You thought the U.S. suffered a setback during the Tet offensive? Not true. You thought the war should not have been fought without a congressional declaration ? Podhoretz says that's ridiculous. Gar Alperovitz, Howard Zinn and other leftist revisionists should take lessons from the author in the fine art of turning the most outlandish of claims into matter-of-fact historical truths. To hear him tell it, with the exception of Kennedy's timidity on the issue of going in more forcefully, most policy decisions on Vietnam were right and could have worked had it not been for the likes of George McGovern and Stanley Hoffmann.

It's particularly painful to read this because Podhoretz could have made a good point. He is right to claim that the original interest in helping South Vietnam was born of a noble kind of idealism, and that the celebration of Hanoi by some anti-war activists was foolish. But most of what the U.S. government did was foolish and destructive, too, and ignoring that strips the book of any credibility.

—J.A.

Winning Back America. *Mark Green. Bantam, $3.95.*

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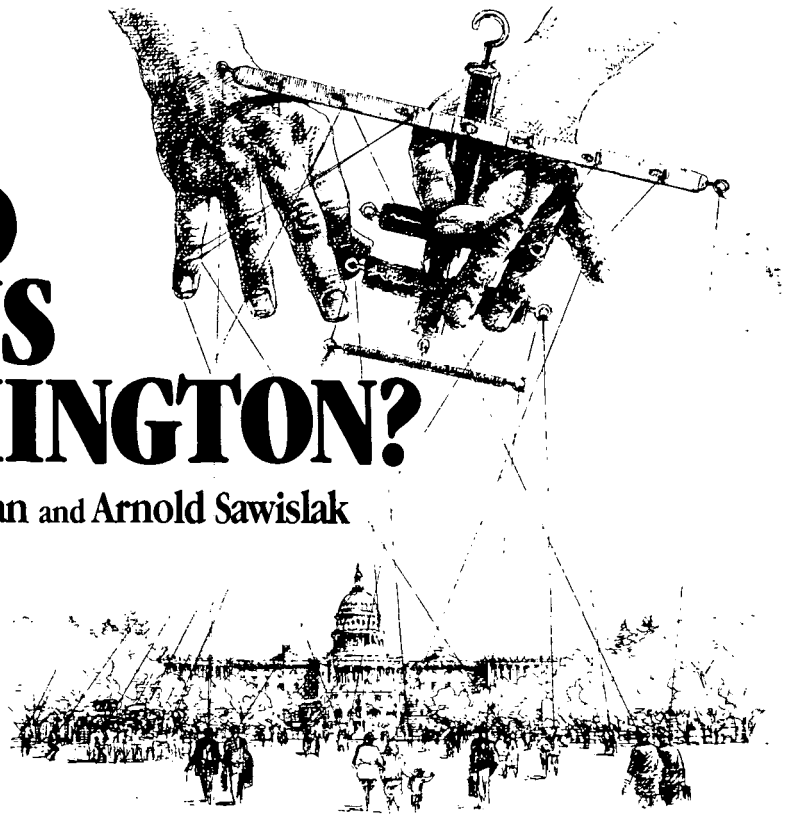

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